

Diary of a Psycho Therapist

The Truth About Gratitude: Why Is It So Hard to Find?



You hear it all the time... If you have an attitude of gratitude, the benefits to your physical and psychological wellbeing can be enormous.

People constantly offer inspirational quotes about what it takes to be grateful in the modern world. Melody Beattie once said, "Gratitude turns what we have into enough and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, and confusion into clarity."

So, if we know that gratitude is a healthy part of our existence, then why is it so hard to find?

Gratitude Could Be in Your Genetics

The truth about gratitude is that some people are more genetically inclined to practice it than others.

Your experiences, childhood environment, and socioeconomic circumstances can also play a role in how you approach the concept of gratitude. It's much easier to find grateful moments in each day when you're not worried about where your next meal is going to come from.

Here's the good news: Gratitude isn't 100% hardwired to your physical makeup.

By taking the following steps, you can introduce more gratitude into your daily habits and, as a result, welcome endless abundance into your life.

1. Give Your Brain A Workout

When people imagine themselves in situations where they receive kindness from others, those with the highest gratitude levels have more activity in the brain's reward centers, perspective-taking, and moral cognition areas.

For example, in those who give to charity often, we can see on brain scans that the mind has more action happening in the spots of their brain where mental calculations occur.

If you focus on adding mental strength to these brain regions, you can shift how your mind perceives gratitude.

Tip for developing this gratitude practice:

1. Close your eyes and visualise yourself in a situation that is still yet to happen today. Perhaps you are visiting a friend for a coffee, are expecting a phone call from a loved one or have a meeting at work.
2. Visualise the impending interaction in your mind. Imagine that it is going particularly well and take time to notice the positive emotions that rise up within you. Perhaps your boss gives you a compliment in the meeting or your friend offers to pay for your coffee.
3. Visualise the positive interaction and thank them for their kindness and generosity.



2. Keep A Journal

Try to establish a daily practice where you journal about the best moments of your day. As you think about these pleasant memories, look for moments where you experienced gratitude.

We often miss the small things that allow us to embrace this attribute, such as someone holding a door open for us, or an acquaintance taking the time to talk beyond idle conversation.

Jot down a few notes about how those experiences made you feel. Then, one by one, read back over them, close your eyes and say 'thank you'. You will soon realise that there is much to be grateful for in every day.

3. Don't Forget How Far You've Come

If you've always had everything handed to you on a plate, gratitude can be challenging to find. But, for most of us, we've had to work hard to get to where we are today. After all, your life right now is a result of what you did a year ago.

Remember when you used to want what you currently have? You have achieved so much to get to where you are today and, sometimes, it can be easy to forget how much you once longed for something, once you have it, and become complacent.

So, remember to reflect, often. What steps did you take to change your circumstances?

When you look back on the challenges you used to face in life, that are no longer an issue now, it's easier to see how far you've come. If that perspective remains with you, gratitude will become a part of your daily routine.

4. Take Time For Meditation, Contemplation Or Prayer

Many spiritual traditions focus on gratitude through the practices of meditating, contemplating or praying. These activities help us look at the universal sources of our current circumstances.

If you take some time to embrace mindfulness in these peaceful moments, your senses can become a lens that focuses on gratitude and transforms it into a miraculous gift.

Tip for developing this practice:

1. Put aside just five minutes of your day to take yourself to a quiet room to meditate, contemplate or pray.
2. Sit down comfortably, close your eyes and spend some time focusing on your breath and clearing any intruding thoughts. Each time your mind wanders, bring it back to focus simply on your breathing.
3. Once your mind feels settled, think about everything you are thankful for. This could be as simple as being thankful for the roof over your head, or being grateful for the sun in the sky that lifts your mood, to the rain that feeds the plants so that you have food to eat. No amount of gratitude is too big, nor too small.
4. Say 'thank you' and feel your gratitude rise up within you.

5. Make Conscious Decisions To Look For Gratitude

Our attitudes create self-fulfilling prophecies throughout the day. If you only look for negativity, guess what you will find? That's right – a whole heap of negative outcomes!

That's why it helps to make the conscious choice to look for more moments to express gratitude. Once you start consciously looking, you'll find a lot of opportunities are out there, each day, to spread positivity.

Gratitude might be influenced by your genetics and circumstances, but it is something that everyone can practice.

How do you incorporate moments of gratitude into your daily routine?

THRIVE &
SHINE

Tara x

