



Simple Steps to a Happier You

TEXTBOOK

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TEXTBOOK

Simple Steps to a Happier You

Gratitude is a foundational base in living a life full of joy. Observe a person living their dream ... undoubtedly loving every moment, and inevitably the word 'gratitude' will pop up in their conversation.

You might think, *of course they are grateful! They have everything they have ever wanted.*

What if it was gratitude that helped them achieve goals, choose the right paths and make the most of every opportunity?

Think about that. Ask them. Most likely, you will find that is true.

Step 1: Be Silent

With the unlimited digital distractions, even youngsters have smartphones, tablets and easy access to computers. We never really stop long enough to notice what is happening within us. Gone is the day of slowing down to appreciate what is around us. What is this doing to our minds and bodies?

Multi-tasking has become the norm now, however this is finally being understood that this is detrimental to performance and achievement in the long run.

While digital technology has helped us grow, it has also added to the subliminal 'noise' we are bombarded with on all sides. We log onto Facebook to check in with our coaching group, only to be hit in the face by posts dealing with wrenching topics. We're asked to pray for the sick, share in mourning, remember someone else's loss, or witness negative interactions between people we love (or those we do not even remember friending).

There is enormous pressure to participate in consistent, daily networking online. We have digital technology to contend with. We communicate with our team members on line. We often find ourselves compelled or obliged to look after aging parents, getting children to sports or music activities, cook, NAMS, Inc.

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clean, stay in touch with friends and family, plan all sorts of events from Christmas dinner to blog hops to book promotion. For business, we produce products and programs for clients.

In that whirlwind round of activity, we can get lost in the 'noise'. It is easy to see activities and practices that are normally joyful as stressful.

We can lose track of all the things we have to be truly grateful for.

Worse, we lose the ability to practice silence. To be still. To experience the present moment; of all moments, the only ones that are truly interactive, truly real, truly ours.

Meditation

This is a simple, effective way to reconnect with that stillness and silence our minds -- so busy with the chatter of emotions, tasks, reactions, memories and anticipation.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the intransitive verb, [to meditate](#), as "to engage in contemplation or reflection". It is not a religious or mystical practice, although it is linked historically to prayer. Certain religions embrace meditation as a vital part of connection to the divine. There is no denying that meditation can become a highly spiritual and positive activity, when it leads us to still all the chattering voices and find our center of consciousness.

When meditating, we silence the mind-chatter and deepen our breathing. This is a rejuvenating and centering activity—both physically and emotionally.

Start small

If you have been a multitasker for years, chances are that your brain and body have treated multitasking as 'second nature' for you. Do not get discouraged! You can do this however it may require a stronger effort and time to re-wire yourself. You owe it to yourself!

Keep this in mind ~ it may take a little time to re-wire yourself. Do not get discouraged! If you have just run a marathon—you need a cooling-down period.

Things to do more:

- ✓ Walk
- ✓ Stretch
- ✓ Take Deep Breaths
- ✓ Intake more water
- ✓ Meditate - Take More Breaks to Silence Your Mind
- ✓ Exercise

What are you putting your mind and body through when you do not treat yourself better? If you decide to add exercise in your day, you would not rush into an aerobics class before doing our stretches first. If you have never exercised at all, you might even start with nothing but stretches for a few days.

It's the same with meditation. It takes practice! You will need to calm your mind down from the busy-ness and get used to enter a meditative state. And the best way to do that is to start small ... and repeat your meditations daily.

Start Your Day with Meditation

Before the chaos of the day takes over, change the way you begin your day. When your brain is begin to awaken, so to speak, is an excellent time to meditate. Find a quiet spot - this place could be your bed - with less visual or loud audio distraction.

Our minds may latch onto distractions. We are like small children especially when we are bored. At first, you may find yourself feeling like meditation as 'boring'.

Some find that soft, ambient music helps put them in a meditative state—particularly music (without words) that stimulates specific brain waves.

BinauralBeatsMeditation.com offers a variety of downloadable music incorporating [specific binaural beats](#).

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BIG TIP: Meditate at the beginning of your day. Many people feel more focus with a positive state of mental alertness by the time you complete their meditation session.

You can digitally download meditation packs or individual pieces of binaural music. You can also find binaural ambient music playlists and tracks on **Spotify** or **YouTube**.

If you meditate at the end of the day to unwind or prepare yourself for sleep, music can be so relaxing. Get rid of the clutter in your mind.

Any ambient music that will relax you and put you in a meditative state will work. Some people have had great success with ambient nature sounds—for example, a stream gurgling, with birdsong in the background.

Focus on Your Breathing

There are various ways you can do to ensure you fall easily into a meditative state—it is worth noting that these little steps work better and better each day as your body learns to recognize the ‘cues’.

1. Sit tall, shoulders back, in a relaxed position.
2. Breathe in through your nose, all the while counting slowly to four.
3. Hold your breath, counting slowly to four.
4. Breathe out through your mouth, counting slowly to four.
5. Repeat.

That’s it! That’s all there is to it. Simple!

This type of breathing is just a technique to center yourself and release stress—particularly if you focus on your breath. If you get into different types of breathing exercises—for example, as part of various forms of Yoga or Qi-Gong or Tai Chi—you will notice slow breathing techniques vary.

You might practice your breathing with alternate nostrils or breathing only through the nose or using your hands on your body to help guide your breathing. Whatever form you do, meditation always works better when you focus on and slow your breathing.

To learn the basics of deep meditation breathing, check out YouTube videos.

Use a mantra.

You can explore various forms of Eastern meditation and use a mantra to help yourself stay in a meditative, focused state of mindfulness and silence.

A mantra is a word you repeat to yourself over and over, to shut out the mind-chatter. Yes, 'ohm' is a basic sound: Particularly if you make it a long sound, and let your lips buzz on the 'm'. (Think of a melodic Asian gong striking: imagine the buzzing tone that goes on long after the note.)

You can use any word—single syllable words are best. Or it can be a phrase. You will hear monks in monasteries repeating the same phrase during meditative prayer in chants.



*You cannot take full advantage of the
benefits of meditation if you are not
practicing it every day.*



For maximum benefit, meditate for at least five minutes in the morning, and another five before going to sleep.

Remember the example of learning to do your stretches before you begin to exercise - then going for a run without stretching first, a week later.

Make a Commitment to Yourself

Commit to practice at least five minutes of meditation, at least once daily, for twenty-one days.

Then do it—and see the difference at the end of those twenty-one days!

Step Two: Be Mindful

Mindfulness is nothing more or less than simply paying attention.

- ✓ **Pay attention to your thoughts.** Are they negative or positive? Do they energize you or depress you?
- ✓ **Pay attention to the people around you.** The greatest gift you can give someone is to notice them. This goes for strangers as well as family members, friends or group members or social networking contacts.

You do not have to drop everything you are doing for every person that crosses your path but be mindful. If someone opens a door for you, don't sweep through with your mind on the next task - smile and say 'thank you' to that person who was so kind to you.

Be the person who opens the door! Read body language and pick up cues. Give your significant other and your kids spontaneous hugs. Don't ignore the dog's whining: Give her a petting and take her outside for five minutes in the yard.

Do that consciously for twenty-one days, and you will find yourself being mindful of clients and of marketing opportunities too. You will 'hear' that simple wish for a template that will take you all of five minutes to make or provide—one that will thrill your clients or team members. You will be there to congratulate a client on an achievement

that might seem small to others, but huge to her.

- ✓ **Pay attention to your surroundings.** Are you in a warm, cozy home? Be thankful! Is there a beautiful bird on your bird-feeder? Celebrate this. Are you using a beautiful-colored yoga mat? Delight in the color.
- ✓ **Pay attention to opportunities for gratitude.** Mindfulness teaches us that we should be grateful for the small things and the great. It is stopping to be thankful for:



We grow when we are grateful. We nurture others and heal ourselves. We nurture others without effort, just by being us.



- the smile someone gave you
- for the hug as your daughter went out the door
- Stopping to thank God for that first snowdrop in your garden after a long winter. *It is noticing the snowdrop in the first place.* When we notice the small opportunities for gratitude, paradoxically that is when we learn to be the most grateful.

The Benefits of Mindfulness

When you do things mindfully—work, eat, rest, interact with others and above all, meditate with purpose and awareness—your body and mind (as well as everyone in your orbit) you will reap natural benefits.

Mindfulness teaches us gratitude. So many people rush through life do not recognize the people, events and things they should be grateful for –or worse, they only see the negative. Every day, there are myriads of things we could find to be grateful for—even when we are going through life's dark chasms.

This is not to say you should deny your feelings (that's not honest). It's not to say you should pretend everything is rosy in your life when it's falling to pieces. But even one little opportunity taken to practice gratitude puts a chink in the door, lets in the light ... even if it's just one spark.

You may not feel you have anything to be grateful for, especially if you are in the crisis stage (or survival stage) of a personal disaster. Begin by being grateful that you're breathing, alive today, taking part in this great adventure we call "life". If you do not feel particularly happy, do it anyway for twenty-one days. Most likely at the end of that time period, you won't feel quite as depressed or hopeless and you will find things to be genuinely grateful—even happy—about.

Negativity may be justified, but it is never helpful. It does not heal wounds. It doesn't forgive. It doesn't allow grace or leave even a crack for miracles.

When we live in negativity, we lose who we really are.

Slow down and live with clear intent and purpose. Slow down to teach yourself to see the good, while downplaying the bad.

Make a commitment to actively live with purpose and practice true mindfulness for the next twenty-one days.

Step Three: Be Healthy

Your health has a direct effect on your mind and your attitude. Period. It is hard to be grateful when you feel sick or exhausted all the time.

You should notice an improvement in mental sharpness, mood and physical comfort, if you start being mindful about your health.

You know what you should do, but it feels like it is hard to do it.

- ✓ Eat more greens and fresh fruit
- ✓ Get enough sleep
- ✓ Drink less alcohol and caffeine and more water

- ✓ Exercise every day

Eating healthy and getting enough sleep is only part of the solution. To truly experience gratitude, you must be mindful of your mental and physical health.

You must keep your body and brain strong! That means giving them both regular exercise, and proper nurture and nutrition.

We have covered exercise, now look for specific forms that excite and energize you—avoid the ones that feel like torture sessions.

Exercise not only is good for keeping our bodies toned and fit, it also helps oxygenate our whole system, as well as our brains. Exercise improves mood by raising your serotonin and dopamine levels, as well as increasing endorphins (the “feel-good” reward chemicals in our brains).

Exercise for those with health challenges

Of course, you should talk to your physician about health conditions that stop you from practicing energetic activities like running, walk instead.

If you cannot walk, do exercises from your chair. If you can only walk fifteen steps with your walker, then fit walking fifteen steps every day into your daily routine.

Do not be concerned about increasing that amount. Just commit yourself to doing it every day for twenty-one days. That’s the important part.

Focus on what you CAN do—not on what you can’t

Life can begin to feel a lot brighter when you can to stop comparing and judging yourself by what you used to be able to do and cannot any more. Accept where you are now. Begin being grateful for what you can do, right now.

Be grateful for being able to take those fifteen steps and oxygenate your body, equalize your blood pressure, improve your breathing, keep your limbs mobile and keep your inner organs from atrophying. Those benefits are huge, and recognize that you are probably expending as much energy taking those steps as someone running for a couple of miles.

If you can only go for a twenty-minute walk instead of a five-mile run, enjoy every moment of that twenty-minute walk. Choose beautiful places to walk in. Take your dog! Take a neighbor's dog, and watch how that puppy enjoys his unexpected walk. There is nothing like a happy dog to teach us what gratitude is all about!

Gratitude ought to be a verb, not a noun.

It is something we need to:

- Make a conscious decision to embrace
- Actively and deliberately put into practice
- Train ourselves, if we have not been in the habit, to feel what is going on in our minds and bodies

It's not easy ... but the rewards are huge, for body, soul and mind.

ALWAYS CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE STARTING ANY NEW FORM OF EXERCISE ... particularly if you have ANY health conditions.

Even people with mobility challenges can reap wonderful benefits from Yoga, which carries a wide range of benefits.

✓ **Yoga.**

There are many forms of Yoga, but all of them involve centering and breath control, and as such, they are ideal for increasing mindfulness, focus and gratitude. It is all about finding fulfillment within, finding peace and calmness, as well as balance. Yoga integrates slow physical movements and postures, deep stretches, meditation and breathing exercises. The use of mantras is often incorporated. It is generally held

to be relaxing, though some of the poses can be difficult for beginners.

It promotes harmony, vitality and balance ... and in addition naturally adds deep breathing and meditation to the mix.

Kundalini Yoga is held to be the most holistic and basic of all forms of yoga. Before exploring other types, familiarize yourself with the basic steps.

Discover the different forms of yoga for yourself. Look for studios in your home town. Try out YouTube and website videos.

✓ **Running.**

You might not think of running as a particularly relaxing or meditative form of exercise, yet it can be. Less so, if you are a sprinter; more so, if you prefer marathons or jogging. Running endows you with all the benefits of yoga, plus increased endorphins. And it can help you burn the most calories, if you are wanting to lose weight.

It helps you sleep better, lowers your blood pressure, decreases depression and elevates mood, oxygenates your system and benefits your cardiovascular system. And that's from just running five minutes a day. (Be sure to warm up and stretch first, and stretch and cool down afterward.) Plus, if you find a running partner or join a running club, the socialization can be an added, enjoyable benefit. And you can run in your choice of location.

✓ **Join a gym.**

To find the perfect exercise for you, consider joining a local gym. You can request an assessment and have a trainer plan the perfect program for you. It eliminates you buying expensive machines, such as weight machines or rowing machines. PLUS you have to make room for these in your own home. You can be as solitary as you like at a gym ... or as sociable. Many gyms offer classes in various sports activities (such as low-impact aerobics or kettle bells).

Make sure you select the right gym. Most gyms will let you try out a session first, so find one you're comfortable with.

✓ **Other activities to take:**

- Take those horseback riding lessons you wanted as a child.
- Take dance classes: any type of dancing! Ballet dancing, belly dancing, jazz, tap, Irish dancing. Whatever appeals to you—try it.

Find a buddy who will do these things with you.

It does not matter what you do for exercise - the trick is to *find an activity that you love*. Do not waste time forcing yourself to indulge in sports activities you hate. There's enough variety, when it comes to physical exercise, for you to hit on the right type of exercise for you—even if it's just a twenty-minute walk every day.

Again, start small if you have to. As little as five minutes a day can make a difference. Make that commitment to exercise daily for twenty-one days to see what a difference that is going to make to your health and well-being.

Exercise Your Brain

Now that you have addressed that you need to take care of the body, it is time to think about exercising your brain. The brain is a lot more complex—and a lot simpler—than most people think.

Consider the phenomenon of learning. Humans and animals can both learn new skills, new activities, new ways of communication. Why? One simple reason: **Repetition**.

Repetition literally makes what psychologists call 'neural pathways' in your brain.

[Merriam-Webster](#) defines a neural pathway as "a series of connected nerves along which electrical impulses travel in the body". In the book *'5 Ways to Rewire Your Brain for Meaningful Life Changes'*, Dr. Hilary Stokes explains that it takes more than just thinking about how to create or rewire a neural pathway. It takes five specific steps, finishing with "**Repeat, repeat, repeat**".

Learning new things exercises the brain. We learn by doing. There are all sorts of ways to keep your brain firing new neurons and making new nerve connections, as well as establishing new pathways.

- ✓ **Do puzzles.** Try crosswords, Sudoku, maze or logic puzzles.
- ✓ **Play games.** (Ones that require you to think!) You don't have to become a grand master of chess: Even solitaire keeps your neurons firing and your brain working.
- ✓ **Learn a language.** (If language isn't your thing, take a night course in some other subject that interests you: One you haven't yet tried to master.)
- ✓ **Read the dictionary.** Learn new words. Learn their meanings. Writers will tell you how much it pays to read a page or two of the dictionary every day.
- ✓ **Learn a craft.** Try crochet, knitting, sewing or woodwork. Learning a physical skill is another good way to kick your brain into neural activity.
- ✓ **Do familiar things differently.** Try writing with your left hand for an entire day. (If you're left-handed, reverse that!) Drive a different route to the mall or take a different route on your daily walk.

How many of us avoid things that we don't do comfortably? Yet trying those same things can often gift us with new insights, give us new things to be grateful for, open new doors—or just exercise our brains.

You don't have to master everything you try, and you don't have to stick with one specific thing for twenty-one days—but DO make it a habit to try *something* different or something new every single day, for those twenty-one days.

Step Four: Be Compassionate

During all this self-improvement, remember to look outward too.

Compassion starts with taking our eyes off our own woes and miseries, and really becoming aware of the needs and situations around us, in our own neighborhoods.

Consider spending time helping those less fortunate. Volunteer to help out at homeless shelters, teach English as a second language to refugees, volunteer at a suicide hotline or help inmates improve their job-seeking skills.

Seeing what others go through—most often through no fault of their own—can be a powerful lesson in gratitude ... and a way to give back to the world for all the blessings you have been fortunate enough to receive.

And remember **self-compassion**, too. Be kind to yourself, rather than judgmental, when you fail at something or make mistakes. Remember you are human, like everyone else, with your own strengths and weaknesses—and your own mistakes.

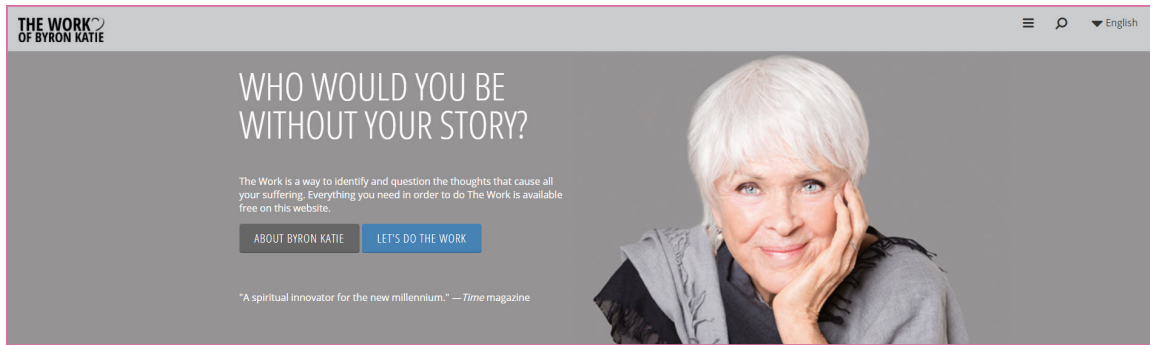
Compassion takes courage. It's not just having warm, fuzzy feelings towards someone. Practicing compassion also means that you need to be:

- ❖ Impartial
- ❖ being compassionate toward those whom you do not like
- ❖ those who do not want your compassion
- ❖ difficult people and those you normally wouldn't even notice.

In fact, you need to be compassionate to all living beings. Only then can you truly appreciate and be grateful for everyone, for all our differences.

Compassion takes honesty—brutal self-honesty included, sometimes. Learn to see yourself and others objectively, without blame or shame. That is when compassion becomes no longer so hard to grow—and when you can strip off that fuzzy 'false compassion' that is really nothing more than easy sentimentality.

In fact, if you have the courage, help yourself to The Work of [Byron Katie](#), a life coach who embraces honesty with eyes wide open. You can do The Work right from her website; she's up-front about how to do it and it's absolutely free (unless you want to go attend a workshop).



It involves examining your story—we all have our stories—and stripping away everything that keeps us stuck. It's simple, and it is inevitably painful, if we have to face stories we've embraced for decades. It means letting go of blaming others for our own life choices and attitude.

But it is ultimately liberating!!!

That's the beauty of compassion. It strips away ego and leaves you in a place of peace, from which it is easy to both love others and be grateful for small and great things. But it requires courage and honesty first.

Step Five: Be Open

As a coach, this is a principle that probably really resonates with you but run a check to see if there is any area of your life where you can expand your openness.

It's hard to experience gratitude if you're closed off and cynical. Allowing yourself to abandon that position and be vulnerable and open takes courage, but it is a practice worth adopting. For one thing, when you are truly open, you are most yourself: And when you are authentic, you attract your own authentic followers with shared values and principles.

Here are five ways to open yourself up

1. **Start with choice.** Choose to be open. Choose to take emotional risks. Choose to be courageous. Choose to close old wounds. Choose to be grateful.

2. **Give others the benefit of the doubt.** See the best in
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everyone. If they turn out not to be the best, you haven't lost anything: They have!

3. **Love unconditionally.** Do not keep a tally and demand that others reciprocate. Love them because they are wonderful. Love them because they're different. Love them because, like you, they are alive and sharing the adventure of life. And if your love isn't returned, and you still love them, that's a truly wonderful gift you can be grateful for.
4. **Trust people until they give you reason not to.** Sometimes when you choose to have faith in someone, you give that person the courage to rise above what's expected of them and become trustworthy even if they're not—especially when what is expected may have been negative in the past.

At a seminar, many years ago, the late Louise Hay talked about a landlord that everyone disliked because the man was sour and mean-spirited. She decided she would see him as trustworthy, as if he had her best interests at heart, so unlike her fellow tenants, she did not go out of her way to avoid him. She always greeted him cheerfully, chatted to him as if he was a friend, and acted as if he had her best interests at heart. At first, he reacted with suspicion, but soon, he started to become the person that she chose to see whenever she interacted with him. She concluded her story by saying it was one of the most powerful lessons she ever gave herself on positivity and gratitude.

5. **Think of others.** For example, if you're painfully shy, instead of focusing on your own fear, your own discomfort or feeling sorry for yourself because no one talks to you, look for someone else who seems to be suffering that sort of discomfort too. Go over to them. Be interested in them. Ask questions, if chatting is too difficult. Focus on making sure that everyone you interact with has a good time—and determine you will do this before you ever go out the door. It can be incredibly rewarding, when you focus on others, instead of on yourself.

Practice these five ways to open yourself to life for twenty-one days, and you will find even more things to be grateful for.

Step Six: Be Inspired

Inspiration is something we cannot live without. It helps us to:

- see things afresh
- give us new ideas
- new ways to work around old problems

It shows us new possibilities and new doorways.

Inspiration keeps us happy about life and helps us get in the zone and connect with our true purpose.

So where do you find inspiration?

We cannot grow in a vacuum. Make it a point to get out of your office and experience new things on a regular basis.

Explore the concept of filling one's inner well of creativity. If we forget to nurture the well, the stock inside becomes depleted and our creativity shrivels.

Ways to fill your well include:

- ✓ **Getting back to nature.** Go camping. Hike in the woods. Visit a new National Park or a new state or province and feast your eyes on unfamiliar terrain. Have some fun outside!
- ✓ **Visiting a museum or an art gallery.** Don't just visit your mainstream galleries and museums in big cities: Look for small, quirky ones in small towns, or ones that specialize in limited topics (ones that you wouldn't normally bother with, or that you don't really know about)
- ✓ **Read books you wouldn't normally read.** That includes books by authors you convinced yourself years ago had nothing to offer you; or books on topics you know nothing about. Or books outside your comfort zone
- ✓ **Watch movies you normally wouldn't see.** That includes genres you've already ignored or movies that make you

uncomfortable, or movies about people you've never been interested in.

You can apply this policy in all areas of your creative life. Stretch your boundaries - doing it so that you are exposed to new ideas, new situations, new people.

And, speaking of which, meeting new people is also a wonderful way to re-fill your well and find inspiration.

A young man in his teens decided to go help volunteer at a nursing home. Well, he didn't so much as volunteer: He was "dragged" there by his mother. To his astonishment, he had a wonderful time, listening to stories from World War Two veterans. He found himself happy that he had taken the time to sit down and listen to them reminisce about their lives. When one woman said to him, *"It's nice to think that someone will remember us"*, he was deeply touched, and found himself thanking God on the way home. That is inspiration at its deepest.

Step Seven: Be Focused

We mentioned about living with purpose. This means be focused. Train yourself to live with purpose all the time. Some things are worth your time and some things are not. Do not waste unnecessary time on social media, TV, energy vampires, or anything else that brings you down. If you begin to feel overwhelmed, angry, or anxious, it is time to focus on what's important.

Family and friends are important. Relationships need nurturing, kind of like flowers in a garden. They won't thrive and grow if you ignore them. You'll drift away. They'll drift away. And before you know it, you're not really part of someone's life anymore: *Someone who used to be important to you.*

Don't put off visiting family or getting together with good friends. It's too easy to say, *"when I finish this project"* or, *"After I get this month behind me"*; or *"when I launch this product"*.

Whatever—and whoever—you make time for is who will be important to you.

Last but not least, remember to take care of yourself!

You are important too, and to neglect your own needs—including things that make you feel special, or relaxed, or pampered—is not practicing gratitude. It's taking yourself for granted—and teaching others to take you for granted too.

Step Eight: Be Positive

You've learned to be positive in the most important ways, but make sure you stay positive in ways that you take for granted.

For example, how many times do you hear yourself say, *"I have to go to the gym"* or *"I have to take the kids to practice"*? Using the word **"have"** subtly changes what you're referring to into a chore: Something over which you feel you have no control. By using language with a negative connotation—even in your own head—you're setting yourself up for resentment.

It's the same with language that promotes guilt. **"Should"** is the biggest culprit. When you catch yourself saying, *"I should exercise"* or *"I shouldn't eat that last brownie"*, you are telling yourself a whole bunch of negative messages. Think of what you are actually saying to yourself.

Here are three typical examples:

What I say	What I am telling my subconscious
"I should exercise."	I'm not exercising because I'm weak, I'm lazy, I'm doing a bad thing. I've failed.
"I should stick to my diet"	Without it, I am fat and have no self-respect. I am a failure. I am not worth loving.
"I should write 1,000 words of my book."	Nobody is going to be interested in what I have to say. I can't do it. I can't write.

You may not be giving those exact negative messages to your subconscious, but I am betting you can resonate with the effect of “should” statements.



The word ‘always’ is a big clue you’re using negative self-talk. Simply change your statement. Correct it on the spot. Try something like, “I forgot to bring the coffee. That’s okay. We can deal with this. I’ll just stop at the grocery store and pick up another bag on the way to the meeting.”



How much better it is to be positive. And you can’t be truly positive unless you are honest with yourself. If you do find there’s a negative you want to state, look it in the eye. Examine it—and find a way to reframe it.

Reframing is something that psychologists love to teach. Reframe the way you talk to yourself, that is—and think about things. This means choosing to transform negative wording into positive wording, and negative thoughts into positive thoughts, because a positive approach is empowering, whereas a negative approach drains.

If you catch yourself thinking, “I forgot to bring the coffee. I’m so useless, I always screw up”

No judgment. No negativity. No blame. Just a focused plan that empowers instead of drains.

Reframe your thinking when you catch yourself using negative self-talk. And if you’re caught in a situation that frustrates you—for example, taking the kids to practice when you really need finish creating that package—consider what makes you grateful about taking the kids to practice.

I am confident you will be able to think of several things!

Step Nine: Be Grateful

Deepening your gratitude level takes conscious, active focus. Be deliberate about it—don't leave gratitude to chance; or even to all these new steps you've committed to take for the next twenty-one days.

Keep a journal of what you are grateful for. For instance, start a gratitude journal. Every day, write down at least 10 things you're grateful for, no matter how small.

It can help to think in categories:

- ✓ Family
- ✓ Friends
- ✓ Money
- ✓ Health
- ✓ Career
- ✓ Home
- ✓ Your mission

When you get up in the morning, go to the same spot every single day—for example, the kitchen window overlooking your favorite Blue Spruce tree and flower bed, or the living room window looking out over the quaint part of your city.

Even if your eyes are bleary and you can't stop yawning, look out that window and notice that you have lived to see another day, another brand-new, sparkling morning. If it's sunny, thank God for the sunshine. If you don't believe in a deity, just say, "I'm thankful for the sunshine".

Be thankful that you are breathing. Be thankful that you have a new day ahead of you to live with focus and joy. Be thankful you are one day closer to your goals. Be thankful for the clients you're going to see today—and if they all cancelled, be thankful for the unexpected time off! (Put it to good use, taking care of yourself!)

Make gratitude a part of every interaction or activity.

Make it a part of your nighttime ritual and make it non-negotiable. Get a colorful, inspiring journal if you like, or write each item on a scrap of paper and drop them in a jar (Pinterest idea), or doodle it. Turn it into a creative act that makes you happy.

You may start out by thinking it's a challenge to be grateful all the time—or even not realistic—but put these nine steps into practice and commit to doing this for twenty-one straight days.

At the end of that time, ask yourself if:

- ✓ Your health has improved
- ✓ You feel less stress
- ✓ You're regaining your joy in life
- ✓ You feel more fulfilled
- ✓ You're having fun again
- ✓ You're learning to live in—and love—the moment
- ✓ Your learning to learn, with love

I'm betting you find yourself saying a big "yes". And feeling... grateful.

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