

21 Tips for Making a Gratitude List

1 Use a journal every day

Use a journal to make your gratitude list. It could be paper journal or an electronic journal of some kind. The physical act of writing or typing does more than just thinking about what you're grateful for.

2 Pick a time that works for you

When making your gratitude list, find a time of day that works in your schedule. It might be first thing in the morning, or before you go to bed or maybe at lunch. While I generally make my gratitude list at the end of the day, it doesn't matter when you make your list - you just need a time where you can step back for 5 minutes.

3 Pick a place to write and put your journal there

This is important to set yourself up for success. For example, if you're making your list at night just before you go to sleep, then you might want to put your journal on your bedside table. One person keeps her journal in her car because she writes her list while waiting for her kids after school at the bus stop. Again, it doesn't matter where you write your list, make it convenient and you're more likely to keep it going.

4 Think of someone who stands out in your day

Often times the biggest challenge many people have with the daily practice of writing a gratitude list is simply getting started. One way to get started on your list for the day is to ask yourself, "Who stood out in my day yesterday?" Use the answer to begin your list of what you're grateful for.

5 Single out the best part of your day

Think back over your day and find the part you wouldn't want to do without - or you couldn't do without. This is another great way to get started on your gratitude list. Then use the best part of your day to kick start your list.

6 Include different areas of your life

Include gratitudes from all areas of your life. I often include one thing I'm grateful for from my personal life, and one from my work life and one from the community in which I live. There are other areas such as spiritual, health, financial, professional, and even more specific relational areas - friends, family and romantic.

7 It's OK if you miss a day

Don't beat yourself up if you miss a day. Writing a gratitude list is supposed to bring out the best in you so if you miss a day, don't get all worked up about it - recommit and get back at it tomorrow.

8 Pick a letter of the alphabet

Randomly select a letter and use it as a starting point to make your list. This is another easy way to get started on your list if you feel stuck. Let's say you pick "H". Now write three you're grateful for that begin with the letter H.

9 Draw on a recent accomplishment

Look back over the last few weeks and think of an accomplishment. It could be one of yours or that of someone else close to you - perhaps your team or maybe someone in your family. Then think through the people involved in helping bring about the accomplish - now you've got a start to your gratitude list.

10 Use vivid meaningful words

Writing your gratitude list shouldn't be a rote exercise. Whenever possible use words that truly convey the feeling of what you're grateful for. For example, instead of, "I'm grateful for an ample supply of food." you could write, "I'm grateful for garden fresh vegetables and the smell of our kitchen - and the privilege of knowing I won't go to bed hungry." While both gratitudes are perfectly fine, the latter triggers more of your genuine emotions and helps you better experience gratitude.

11 Wind back the clock and come forward

You've come through so much. Think back to your childhood, your adolescent years and up till now. Recall the activities and the people in all the different eras of your life and reflect on how they shaped the person you've become.

12 Look for mentors

Maybe it's your parents, a teacher, a coach, a boss - whomever. Think of the people who've played key a role in your life and in your development.

13 The last sixty minutes is all the counts

Make your gratitude list by looking at the last sixty minutes only. Nothing further back than one hour. While it may sound difficult, it will quickly remind you of the many blessings that are easy to miss.

14 Don't force it

If you find yourself sitting and trying to write your gratitudes but nothing is coming out... don't force it. If you find writing your list is becoming a chore, then take a day off and come back fresh. Research has proven that gratitude decreases when we try to force it.

15 Look back through your journal

One of the best ways to remind yourself of what you're grateful for is to go back and read through what you wrote last week or the week before. It's ok to list something again - you might use the same language or you may try some vivid more meaningful words.

16 Learn from a recent challenge

The challenges you've faced and the ones you've overcome define your character. Identify a challenge you've recently moved through... it may be personal or professional. Reflect on what you discovered from the experience. Start your gratitude list there.

17 Go deeper

This technique is helpful when you already have one item written on your gratitude list. Consider what you've listed that you're grateful for and go deeper with it. For this one item - think about why you're grateful for it, all the people to whom you're grateful, what they did and perhaps most importantly, why they did it - try to understand their motivations. Add more gratitudes based on what comes up.

18 Ask someone

Ask a person you trust, "If you were me, what would you be grateful for." You might be surprised by the answer.

19 Pay attention to annoyances

Hard to believe but true. take your annoyances and transform them into something you're grateful for. For example, "Damn, I burnt the toast" turns into - I'm grateful for 1) modern conveniences like my toaster 2) the sense of smell and taste - they provide pleasure but also keep me safe 3) the farmers and producers of the food that makes its way to my table. While gratitude doesn't fix the toast, it reframes the situation for you.

20 Resist the temptation to think it's stupid

Writing a gratitude list is so simple and at some point you may catch yourself thinking that it probably isn't worth the time and effort. It's easy to think that you've got it figured out or you've tapped all the benefits - or whatever! Resist the temptation to give up making your gratitude list. While it is simple, being grateful and making a gratitude list isn't always easy and that's why the 21st and final tip, which you'll get tomorrow, is extremely important.

21 Consume other people's gratitudes

Next to your own life, there's no better source for gratitude ideas than by reading or listing to what others are grateful for. I've subscribed to gratitude blogs for years to prevent gratitude from going stale or becoming a flavour of the month. Probably the easiest thing for you is to register for the Daily Gratitudes email and in it, you can read what I'm grateful for as well as read what our weekly Guest Contributor is grateful for. The email goes out at 8am (my time) Monday to Friday and you can use it as a reminder to make your list, get fresh gratitude ideas and ultimately to continue to reap the benefits of living with a grateful mindset.

If you don't already get it, visit www.GratitudeAtWork.ca/daily-gratitudes and we'll get you signed up for the Daily Gratitudes.