

HELPING YOURSELF WITH GRATITUDE THERAPY

An important first step in improving how you feel is to learn more about what you are experiencing. By increasing your understanding of moods and their causes, you will improve your ability to identify your own negative moods and feel better.

Moods tend to linger for periods of time. When your mood is negative, this reduces your enjoyment of life, stops you doing the things you like and disrupts your relationships with others.

Negative moods often feel as though they are caused by bad things that happen, but this is often not the case. When our mood is negative we tend to see the world as though it were bad. The secret of improving mood is to learn how to see the world as though it were good.

Development of frequent negative moods

The more negative moods you experience, the more likely you are to see things in a negative light, leading to more negative moods. This downward spiral can leave you feeling really depressed, anxious and frustrated. However, you can control your thoughts. You can choose what you eat, you choose what you do with body, and you can choose what to with your mind. It just takes a bit of effort.

“But aren’t negative moods important?”

It is important not to ignore negative emotions. Emotions are part of what it is to be human, and healthy moods and emotions enrich your life and steer you in a positive direction. They may also help you to deal healthily with unfavourable life events. It is when the balance between positive and negative feelings slips, and over time you feel you may be experiencing more and more negative moods that mental exercises such as those included in this workbook may be helpful.

What is positive psychology?

Positive psychology is newly emerging field that focuses on the role positivity plays in everyday life. Many published studies have shown the beneficial effects of positive thinking on the immune system, health and many psychological problems such as depression and anxiety.

Helping yourself with gratitude therapy

Instead of telling you to stop thinking negatively, gratitude therapy makes you more positive in a holistic manner. By focusing on positive things in your life, you will find your mood improves and you stop thinking negative thoughts automatically.

It may sound hard to focus on what you are grateful for if you are feeling down. It is not necessary for everything in your life to be ideal to begin to spend time focusing on gratitude. Research has shown that beginning to spend a small amount of time each day focusing on positive thoughts (in this case what you are grateful for) will help improve your mood. In other words, the more you focus on positive events, the easier it becomes to feel more positive in the future.

HELPING YOURSELF WITH GRATITUDE THERAPY

The process

To carry out gratitude therapy, you need to find a quiet place where you can think without being disturbed. You could try doing it before going to sleep, or sitting on a train, or simply sitting by yourself in a room without any distractions. You may also like to try it when you may be feeling down or experiencing a low mood, it is up to you.

There are many things in our lives, both large and small, that we might be grateful for. The process of gratitude therapy requires you to think back over your life, be it the past month or years ago and write down up to 6 things in your life that you are grateful or thankful for once a day for two weeks.

Please use the specific pages in the workbook to write your gratitude items. Examples could be for wonderful parents, for being healthy, for a friend being kind, for your partner or you being successful at something. See the start of the gratitude records towards the end of the workbook for an example.

When you have finished your list, take the first item and concentrate on feeling grateful about that item for about half a minute. Then move on to the next item and feel 'being grateful' for the second item. Do this for each of the items in turn. With each item, try to reconnect with the positive feelings you experience when feeling grateful. You should spend about five minutes on this task. Five minutes spent focusing on the positive feelings that arise from experiencing gratitude is usually enough for the therapy to take effect and begin to make you feel better. Five minutes may not seem like a long time, but setting aside specific time to focus on what you are grateful for will make it easier to feel more positive throughout each day.

When you carry out this task you may find your mind wandering. Don't worry. Once you notice your mind has wandered, simply bring it back to the feeling of being grateful. Writing down six things you are grateful for every day for fourteen days may seem a daunting task, but you will get better at it with practice. Once you start to find it difficult thinking of new things, just try thinking of things from your day rather than the distant past. For instance, 'I am grateful that it didn't rain today' or 'I am grateful that my boss showed me an easier way to...'. If you are still struggling you can think of even the smallest things 'I am grateful that there was cereal in the cupboard'. It really isn't that important what you are grateful for, rather that you are spending time feeling thankful. This is the key to enhancing positivity in your life, and lessening negative moods.

The next pages contain examples of gratitude records for each day. Start day one today...

Example

List up to 6 things that you are grateful for in your life on the lines below

- 1 I am grateful for a loving girlfriend who cares about me, and is thoughtful
- 2 I am grateful for living in a lovely part of the world. With opportunities !
- 3 I am grateful that my car does not always break down. And for the AA
- 4 I am grateful for having a roof over my head. I have shelter and warmth.

HELPING YOURSELF WITH GRATITUDE THERAPY

5 I am grateful for my health, it may not be perfect but I am luckier than many people I know

6 I am grateful for having food in the cupboard, and that I know how to cook
Remember to spend some time focusing on the feeling of gratitude that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel grateful for.

Day 1

List up to 6 things that you are grateful for in your life on the lines below

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Remember to spend some time focusing on the feeling of gratitude that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel grateful for.

Day 2

List up to 6 things that you are grateful for in your life on the lines below

(These can be new items or the same as a previous day)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Remember to spend some time focusing on the feeling of gratitude that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel grateful for.

Day 3

List up to 6 things that you are grateful for in your life on the lines below

(These can be new items or the same as a previous day)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Remember to spend some time focusing on the feeling of gratitude that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel grateful for.

HELPING YOURSELF WITH GRATITUDE THERAPY

Day 4

List up to 6 things that you are grateful for in your life on the lines below
(These can be new items or the same as a previous day)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Remember to spend some time focusing on the feeling of gratitude that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel grateful for.

Day 5

List up to 6 things that you are grateful for in your life on the lines below
(These can be new items or the same as a previous day)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Remember to spend some time focusing on the feeling of gratitude that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel grateful for.

Day 6

List up to 6 things that you are grateful for in your life on the lines below
(These can be new items or the same as a previous day)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Remember to spend some time focusing on the feeling of gratitude that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel grateful for.

Day 7

List up to 6 things that you are grateful for in your life on the lines below
(These can be new items or the same as a previous day)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

HELPING YOURSELF WITH GRATITUDE THERAPY

Remember to spend some time focusing on the feeling of gratitude that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel grateful for.

Day 8

List up to 6 things that you are grateful for in your life on the lines below
(These can be new items or the same as a previous day)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Remember to spend some time focusing on the feeling of gratitude that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel grateful for.

Day 9

List up to 6 things that you are grateful for in your life on the lines below
(These can be new items or the same as a previous day)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Remember to spend some time focusing on the feeling of gratitude that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel grateful for.

Day 10

List up to 6 things that you are grateful for in your life on the lines below
(These can be new items or the same as a previous day)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Remember to spend some time focusing on the feeling of gratitude that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel grateful for.

Day 11

List up to 6 things that you are grateful for in your life on the lines below
(These can be new items or the same as a previous day)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

HELPING YOURSELF WITH GRATITUDE THERAPY

5 _____
6 _____

Remember to spend some time focusing on the feeling of gratitude that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel grateful for.

Day 12

List up to 6 things that you are grateful for in your life on the lines below
(These can be new items or the same as a previous day)

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____
6 _____

Remember to spend some time focusing on the feeling of gratitude that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel grateful for.

Day 13

List up to 6 things that you are grateful for in your life on the lines below
(These can be new items or the same as a previous day)

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____
6 _____

Remember to spend some time focusing on the feeling of gratitude that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel grateful for.

Day 14

List up to 6 things that you are grateful for in your life on the lines below
(These can be new items or the same as a previous day)

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____
6 _____

Remember to spend some time focusing on the feeling of gratitude that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel grateful for.