Day 1

Welcome to the first day of *12 Days of Gratitude Project* by Jennuine Joy! At this point, you might be wondering, "what actually is the point of doing these activities for 12 days? Is this going to help me in any way at all?" And to be honest, before I made this, I thought the same thing. I did not want to put another "Thankfulness Challenge" out into the world if it was not going to add positive value into people's lives. So I did some research and found that, yes! Doing gratitude activities does actually improve your quality of life!

So for day 1, I want you to read the article on the last two pages of this printout. It'll take you less than 10 minutes, I promise. This article will help you understand why doing these activities will be good for you.

After reading the article, come back here and write down five things you are thankful for to get your heart and mind ready for the gratitude activities you'll do for the next 11 days.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

Day 2

Think about something you thank God for everyday. When we get into a routine of thanking God for a certain thing, it can become such a habit that we sometimes forget why exactly we are thankful for it. Today, write down specific reasons as to *why* you are thankful for that particular thing.

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Day 3

Today's activity doesn't ask you to write anything down – Still do the activity anyway! I love this one and I think you will too.

Set your timer for five minutes. Take yourself away from distractions, and still your heart. Use this time to reflect on all the things you are thankful for, and thank God for putting those things in your life. Work on really feeling the emotions that being grateful gives you.

Day 4

Read the following bible verses.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:18
- Colossians 3:17
- Philippians 4:6

What is the theme found in these verses?

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Notes (Here you can write about how this verse made you feel, how you can apply it to your life, what it made you think of, etc.)

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Day 5

There are so many things in our lives that we do not like/complain about/wish didn't exist. Yesterday, we read 3 verses that told us to be thankful even if our life is full of these things, and to even be thankful *for* those things. So today, reflect on something that you normally would not feel grateful for. Rethink about that thing with a grateful heart, and spin it in a way that makes it something to be thankful for.

The thing I am usually not grateful for, but am choosing to be grateful for it today is

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Day 6

Write a handwritten note to someone you are thankful for. Tell them why you are thankful for them. When you're done, put a stamp on it and send it off!



Day 7

We spend a lot of time expressing gratefulness towards other people or things, but we rarely express gratefulness for ourselves. We are going to change that today.

What are five of your physical characteristics that you are thankful for?

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2 -_____

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3 -_____

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4 -_____

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5 -_____

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What are five of your non-physical characteristics that you are thankful for?

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3 -_____

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4 -_____

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5 -_____

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Day 8

Take five minutes today to sit with nature. Either find a nice spot to sit outside, or sit by a window and look out. As you soak up the outdoors, write down why you are thankful for God's beautiful creation, aka our Earth!

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Day 9

It's great to be appreciative of the things going on in your present life, but it's is also great to reflect on your past, and feel grateful for events, moments, people, things, places, or situations that you once encountered. Write down a few things in your past that you feel gratitude towards.

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Day 10

Read the following bible verses.

- **1 Chronicles 16:34**
- **Psalm 100:4**
- **Psalm 69:30**

What do these verses have in common?

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Notes (Here you can write about how this verse made you feel, how you can apply it to your life, what it made you think of, etc.)

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Day 11

Life is meant to be fun and we should feel great amounts of joy often. What are some things that add fun and joy to your life? Write these things down and as you do, thank God for putting them into your life.

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Day 12

Go through the entire day and make a conscious effort to be grateful for everything. Every situation, every thing, every person, every moment you encounter, be thankful for it all.

At the end of the day, come back here and describe how this activity impacted your day.

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Congratulations! You have finished the 12 Days of Gratitude Project. To wrap things up, I want to practice what I have preached to you for the last 12 days, and give you a huge THANK YOU for participating! I believe that this world is full of things worthy of our gratitude and we should take the time to appreciate them. I truly hope that this project has made you happier, just as research from day 1 suggested it would. If these 12 days did brighten your life and make your heart full, I hope that you will share these activities with others so that they can experience that joy too!

- Jenn

Giving thanks can make you happier

https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier

November kicks off the holiday season with high expectations for a cozy and festive time of year. However, for many this time of year is tinged with sadness, anxiety, or depression. Certainly, major depression or a severe anxiety disorder benefits most from professional help. But what about those who just feel lost or overwhelmed or down at this time of year? Research (and common sense) suggests that one aspect of the Thanksgiving season can actually lift the spirits, and it's built right into the holiday — expressing gratitude.

The word gratitude is derived from the Latin word *gratia*, which means grace, graciousness, or gratefulness (depending on the context). In some ways gratitude encompasses all of these meanings. Gratitude is a thankful appreciation for what an individual receives, whether tangible or intangible. With gratitude, people acknowledge the goodness in their lives. In the process, people usually recognize that the source of that goodness lies at least partially outside themselves. As a result, gratitude also helps people connect to something larger than themselves as individuals — whether to other people, nature, or a higher power.

In positive psychology research, gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships.

People feel and express gratitude in multiple ways. They can apply it to the past (retrieving positive memories and being thankful for elements of childhood or past blessings), the present (not taking good fortune for granted as it comes), and the future (maintaining a hopeful and optimistic attitude). Regardless of the inherent or current level of someone's gratitude, it's a quality that individuals can successfully cultivate further.

Research on gratitude

Two psychologists, Dr. Robert A. Emmons of the University of California, Davis, and Dr. Michael E. McCullough of the University of Miami, have done much of the research on gratitude. In one study, they asked all participants to write a few sentences each week, focusing on particular topics.

One group wrote about things they were grateful for that had occurred during the week. A second group wrote about daily irritations or things that had displeased them, and the third wrote about events that had affected them (with no emphasis on them being positive or negative). After 10 weeks, those who wrote about gratitude were more optimistic and felt better about their lives. Surprisingly, they also exercised more and had fewer visits to physicians than those who focused on sources of aggravation.

Another leading researcher in this field, Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman, a psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania, tested the impact of various positive psychology interventions on 411 people, each compared with a control assignment of writing about early memories. When their week's assignment was to write and personally deliver a letter of gratitude to someone who had never been properly thanked for his or her kindness, participants immediately exhibited a huge increase in happiness scores. This impact was greater than that from any other intervention, with benefits lasting for a month.

Of course, studies such as this one cannot prove cause and effect. But most of the studies published on this topic support an association between gratitude and an individual's well-being.

Other studies have looked at how gratitude can improve relationships. For example, a study of couples found that individuals who took time to express gratitude for their partner not only felt more positive toward the other person but also felt more comfortable expressing concerns about their relationship.

Managers who remember to say "thank you" to people who work for them may find that those employees feel motivated to work harder. Researchers at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania randomly divided university fund-raisers into two groups. One group made phone calls to solicit alumni donations in the same way they always had. The second group — assigned to work on a different day — received a pep talk from the director of annual giving, who told the fund-raisers she was grateful for their efforts. During the following week, the university employees who heard her message of gratitude made 50% more fund-raising calls than those who did not.

There are some notable exceptions to the generally positive results in research on gratitude. One study found that middle-aged divorced women who kept gratitude journals were no more satisfied with their lives than those who did not. Another study found that children and adolescents who wrote and delivered a thank-you letter to someone who made a difference in their lives may have made the other person happier — but did not improve their own well-being. This finding suggests that gratitude is an attainment associated with emotional maturity.

Ways to cultivate gratitude

Gratitude is a way for people to appreciate what they have instead of always reaching for something new in the hopes it will make them happier, or thinking they can't feel satisfied until every physical and material need is met. Gratitude helps people refocus on what they have instead of what they lack. And, although it may feel contrived at first, this mental state gr c1qasows stronger with use and practice.

Here are some ways to cultivate gratitude on a regular basis.

Write a thank-you note. You can make yourself happier and nurture your relationship with another person by writing a thank-you letter expressing your enjoyment and appreciation of that person's impact on your life. Send it, or better yet, deliver and read it in person if possible. Make a habit of sending at least one gratitude letter a month. Once in a while, write one to yourself.
Thank someone mentally. No time to write? It may help just to think about someone who has done something nice for you, and mentally thank the individual.
Keep a gratitude journal. Make it a habit to write down or share with a loved one thoughts about the gifts you've received each day.
Count your blessings. Pick a time every week to sit down and write about your blessings — reflecting on what went right or what you are grateful for. Sometimes it helps to pick a number — such as three to five things — that you will identify each week. As you write, be specific and think about the sensations you felt when something good happened to you.
Pray. People who are religious can use prayer to cultivate gratitude.
Meditate. Mindfulness meditation involves focusing on the present moment without judgment. Although people often focus on a word or phrase (such as "peace"), it is also possible to focus on what you're grateful for (the warmth of the sun, a pleasant sound, etc.).