

# GUIDED MEDITATION 3: ACCOMPANYING HANDOUT

WRAPPING UP THE DAY: Cultivating gratitude

## WHY CULTIVATE GRATITUDE

In difficult times, and especially when the sympathetic or “fight or flight” nervous system is activated, it can be challenging to access feelings of gratitude. However, gratitude is one of those emotions/vibrations that has the ability to transform your perspective. And by consciously cultivating gratitude on a regular basis, you can train your brain to have easier access to this broader, lighter perspective during difficult times.

Further reading on the effects of gratitude on the human brain and relationships

<https://chopra.com/articles/the-neuroscience-behind-gratitude-how-does-cultivating-appreciation-affect-your-brain>

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01491/full>

One thing to note here is that we do not want to deny, suppress, ignore, or judge authentic emotions in the name of cultivating gratitude. This is an exercise and not permission to reject uncomfortable and yet completely natural range of human emotion. Notice during this exercise if thoughts like, “I should be grateful.” or “Other people have it worse than me so I should probably stop complaining.”. The purpose of this exercise is not to add weight to those voices. Give yourself full permission to feel how you are actually feeling. Express what you are actually feeling. Move compassionately through and out the other side of what you are actually feeling.

## EXERCISES IN GRATITUDE

When and if it feels right, useful, or pleasurable, use these prompts to cultivate gratitude.

1. List 1 thing that went well today. (Tip: on really difficult days go back to basics, “I saw that bird on my telephone wire.”)
2. Write the names of 3 special loved ones (people, pets, historical figures, fictional characters). Write each of them a short note about what they mean to you and why you appreciate them.
3. Write 5 things that you feel grateful for about your own body. Give yourself a tight hug while speaking what you wrote out loud.
4. Next time you’re on social media take the time to express a message of gratitude to an artist/musician/actor that you admire.
5. If you have a pet or an animal you trust, try focusing deeply on your next experience with them. Go deep into the sensations of their fur on your hand. Can you feel their heartbeat? Notice how easily they receive your attention and touch. Allow their gaze to impact you. Are they communicating without speaking? Animals are great teachers of expressing and receiving gratitude.
6. Go through 1 day with the agenda of expressing as much gratitude as you can out loud. Turn it into a game and keep a tally.
7. Choose to find and express one thing you are grateful for in a partner, child, co-worker, or friend.
8. Look into your own eyes in a mirror. Say out loud what you are grateful for about your personality, your abilities, your choices, or your relationships. “I am grateful for my \_\_\_\_\_.”
9. Write a note to your future self expressing gratitude for what they have accomplished. It can be as simple as, “I am grateful that you are alive, breathing, and have the use of your eyes to read this. I am grateful you exist.”
10. Find a song that makes you feel loved, happy, aroused, relaxed, safe, etc and sing along with gratitude in your heart for music.