

## About the Author



Jonathan Parker loves sharing knowledge and helping others to make their life easier and rise to higher consciousness levels. He has been sharing his discoveries and wisdom for more than 40 years. This short book contains just one of the "gems" he has discovered that can attract the life you've been searching for.

You are continually setting creative and attractive forces in motion with your beliefs, fears, emotions, and actions. By understanding how the process works you are empowered to rise to a life of greater happiness and fulfilment, and will attract the people and goodness you want.

If you would like to learn more Jonathan, please visit his website:

[www.JonathanParker.org](http://www.JonathanParker.org)

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## Preface

**Most people in the U.S. think about gratitude in November when Thanksgiving rolls around. Families gather around the dinner table and share what they are grateful for. As wonderful as this is I have found that there is much more to gratitude than just counting your blessings and expressing what you are grateful for.**

**Gratitude is a frequency of consciousness that creates an attractor field which aligns you with what you want to attract into your life. It dissolves the effects of disbelief and negative thinking, while activating all that is good.**

**Gratitude automatically repels negative forces and therefore, the depths of peace and happiness that lie at the core of your soul emerge in your life. This leads to an expression of happiness and fulfillment you didn't realize exists.**

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**So, gratitude is more than a nice idea, or a habit to instill in children to be polite. It is a positive force of creation and attraction that enhances your life.**

## Introduction

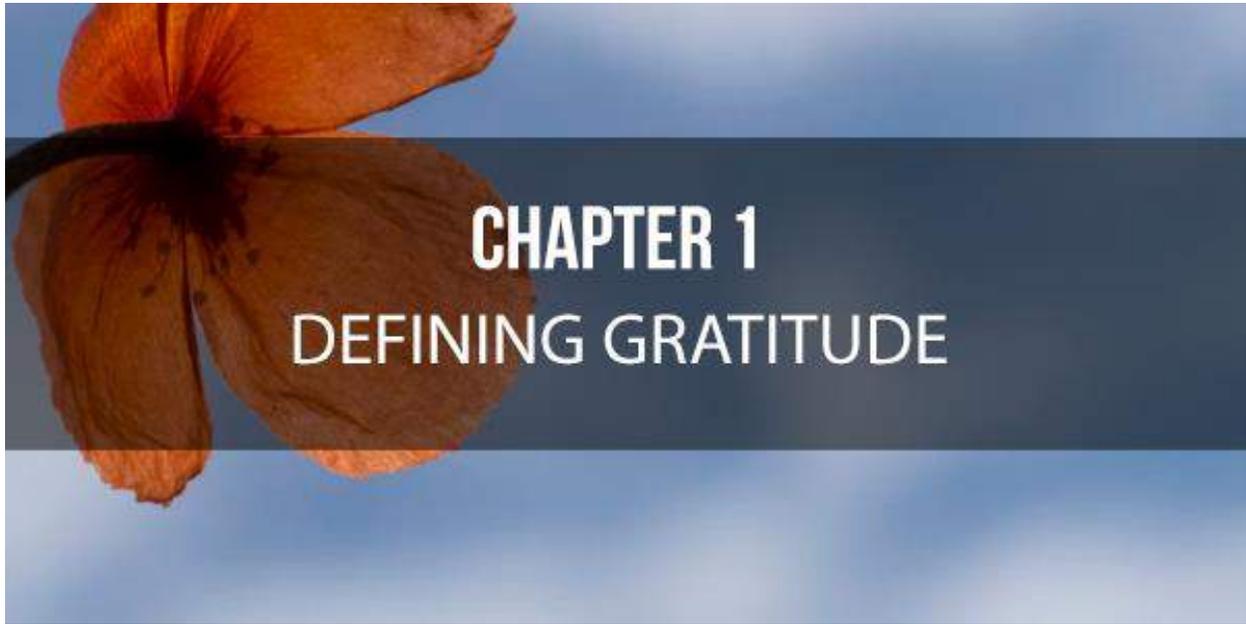
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Author, William Arthur Ward, once said, “Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings.”

Gratitude is the unique quality of being entirely thankful for what you have, as well as always being ready to appreciate and help others. Gratitude is one of the primary keys to living a happy and prosperous life. For when you feel and show gratitude for what you have, you are content with your life and positive about all that it has to offer.

If you are currently in a difficult situation in your life and think that it is impossible for you to be thankful, then it's the perfect time to learn how gratitude can turn your life around. With your determination and effort, you can discover how gratitude can transform your life.

Gratitude is an attitude and outlook that can be cultivated and become a habit and new level of consciousness. You can begin today bringing gratitude into your life and your relationships.



## Defining Gratitude

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Almost every day, we say thanks. We absentmindedly tell it to the grocery store checkout clerk and to the barista at our local coffee shop but are these sincere expressions of gratitude, or merely a response we've been conditioned to give?

What exactly is gratitude?

As you will discover as you read through this guide, a simple "thanks" can have a powerful impact on both the person communicating their appreciation and the person receiving that appreciation. This is especially true when the genuine emotion of gratitude backs the word.

The Roman philosopher, Cicero, described gratitude as the greatest of virtues and the parent of all others. It is a key that opens doors and is the quality that makes us and keeps us young. This statement, spoken more than two thousand years ago, is quite compelling. It speaks of gratitude as a virtue or quality of being. Gratitude is just this and so much more.

Gratitude is also an emotion. It is something that we feel deep in our hearts. We can feel it toward others, when people are grateful to us, or when we see a person express gratitude toward another. As a sentiment or as an exchange between people, there is simplicity to being grateful. And yet, when trying to understand this simplicity, we can find a more complex meaning. Gratitude is an emotion, it is an experience, and it is a conscious choice for awareness. Connections in your relationships are both strengthened and fostered with gratitude.

At its core, gratitude holds an experience of universal belonging. You can experience a real sense of overall well-being when you practice the intentional cultivation of gratitude in your life.

Linguistically, gratitude is found across many languages and cultures. It originates from the Latin word '*gratia*', which means grace, graciousness, or gratefulness. However, we don't all experience or perceive it in the same way.

Essentially, it is an emotion that helps you express appreciation and thankfulness. It is one of the most underestimated of all your emotions.

Yet many contend is the cornerstone of living a happy and fulfilled life. Most commonly associated with saying thank you for receiving a gift, an act of gratitude is unconditional and selfless - you don't do it to get a favor in return.

Gratitude creates a space that allows you to acknowledge the things that are good without disregarding what's difficult or sad. It provides you with a foundation of reassurance that there is good around you.

Gratitude is expressed for something outside of you that someone has brought to your life. It is not as much about what you have done, so by humbly accepting the value of the benefits that others have brought to your life, you open your connection to something beyond yourself.

### **Gratitude as a State of Being**

Take a moment and shut your eyes and try to recall a time when you felt appreciated. Remember this event as if it were happening at this very moment.

What words did you hear?

What did your body feel like at that moment?

What triggered the experience?

What were you thinking at the moment?

What did you enjoy most about being appreciated?

What about this particular moment brought you to remember it today?

Write down your answers to these questions in a notebook that you can refer back to later.

There isn't a single definition of gratitude. Gratitude has been conceptualized and defined in the context of attitudes, emotions, morals, traits, habits, and even coping techniques. Gratitude is without a doubt, an incredibly complex and dynamic emotion. It is a skill that contributes to the satisfaction in relationships and human excellence.

### **Gratitude as an Emotion**

Emotion is about something or someone. It is about a personally significant circumstance or experience. By exploring gratitude in this way, you can see that it occurs in response to an action within the framework of a relationship. Something has been given by someone and received by someone else. This exchange helps to foster the emotion of gratitude.

Gratitude is an empathic emotion, which means that in order to experience the emotion in exchange, the receiver needs to place himself in the position of the giver. A feeling of gratitude in response to the gift requires the recipient of the gift to sense the giver's positive intention. It is this recognition and empathic

connection that provides the foundation for the emotional experience of gratitude in the interaction.

You can express gratitude for any number of reasons. You can be grateful for receiving personal benefits, such as advice from a mentor, or you can be grateful for material items, like a gift, your home, or a car. Gratitude can also be fostered through interpersonal fulfillment, such as getting a hug from a friend. Or, you can experience gratitude for a monetary gain, like getting a raise at work.



## CHAPTER 2

# BENEFITS OF GRATITUDE



Life doesn't always go the way you want; the job promotion goes to someone else, you miss a flight due to bad traffic, elderly parents need more care. It's easy to allow yourself to wallow in self-pity and let negative feelings like anger and frustration to take over.

Feeling "poor me" doesn't help improve situations, but instead only leads to more negativity. However, research shows that if you replace your negative feelings with gratefulness for the things you do have, profound changes can take place.

Gratitude has also been proven to increase our capacity for experiencing other positive emotions. Often, gratitude is described with the same feelings connected to it, like love, compassion, humility, comfort, passion, and confidence.

Cultivating gratitude can be a direct way to enhance these other emotions in your life.

Below are six benefits you can expect after practicing gratitude:

### **1. Physical Health**

Studies have shown that grateful people have more immune protecting blood cells, which means they suffer fewer coughs and colds. Being grateful can also reduce aches and pains in the body and lower blood pressure. Living from a place of gratitude can also help you sleep deeper and more restfully.

### **2. Mental Health**

Positivity creates more positivity. In the 1990's a new field of psychology emerged called "Positive Psychology" which studied positive emotions and began to link gratitude with greater happiness.

When you consciously identify what is good in your life, you start to connect with positive emotions at a more meaningful level. This helps you feel more present in your life, more alert to make choices, less depressed and more energetic.

Research conducted at the University of California found that individuals who were asked to keep a journal of positive experiences reported feeling happier and more optimistic about life than individuals who were asked to focus on recording only negative things.

### **3. Self-esteem**

One of the worst feelings is the failure to genuinely celebrate someone else's success while feeling a pinch of envy. Self-esteem strengthens when you recognize the value of what you have already in your life.

When your friend or neighbor has a windfall, rather than feeling bitter, gratitude will help you appreciate their good fortune and share in the joy. Likewise, other toxic emotions like frustration and regret are lessened. Studies have shown that grateful people are less likely to say they are materialistic or experience envy.

#### **4. Resilience**

Connecting with a higher level of positivity through gratefulness can make you more emotionally resilient when you are faced with trauma or adversity. *The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* published a study in 2013 that discovered that individuals displayed great resilience after the 9/11 Terrorist attack in New York City if they had a grateful temperament. By focusing on abundance, we fortify yourself against falling into negative emotional patterns when you go through difficult times.

#### **5. Friendship**

Grateful people experience closer friendships. One reason for this is that grateful people are more likely to help others. Being of service to others creates happiness and strengthens friendship bonds. Studies have shown that individuals who have a social support network tend to have a stronger immune system.

Grateful people are more likely to forgive others and are less obsessed with themselves. Toxic emotions like envy and regret stop you from connecting with people. Expressing your appreciation helps you become more generous and compassionate, less judgmental, and less critical. Creating stronger bonds with people also reduces feelings of loneliness and opens you up to new opportunities.

#### **6. Happiness**

In 2005 the *American Psychologist Journal* reported that performing only a single act of gratitude could increase happiness by 10% and reduce depression by 35%. The effects lasted 6 months from the single act. Participants who kept a daily journal for a week discovered the benefits lasted even longer.

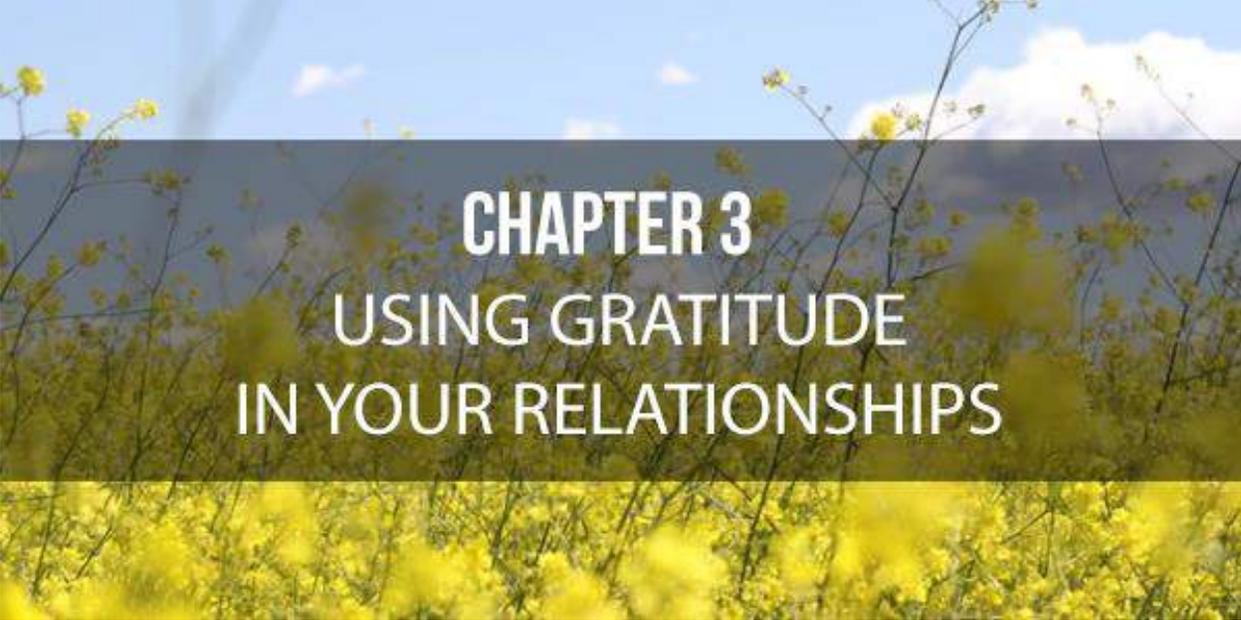
No experience in life is purely good or purely bad. However, how you interpret the things that happen to you, determines how you feel about your life. Grateful people tend to perceive the world as more positive. For instance, if you are in a car crash, you can

either think “wow I’m lucky that I wasn’t hurt and I’m grateful to be alive,” or you can think “I’m really angry I crashed.” Studies show that people who are more grateful have a better recollection of happy memories.

Gratitude can be learned. With practice, gratitude can be a choice, an intentional way of viewing the world. This is not to say that you should discount or make light of difficulties or painful experiences in your life, but you should choose not to let yourself become overwhelmed in these times, and find a way to see beyond them.

You can look with gratitude at what you learn about others and yourself when you're moving through hardships.





## CHAPTER 3 USING GRATITUDE IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

It is easy to get caught up in the hectic routine of everyday living and forget to express your appreciation to those that matter to you the most. Take a moment to think about the relationships in your life and consider a time when you felt gratitude for that person.

One of the most common mistakes you can make in your relationships is the assumption error. This occurs when you assume that someone in your life knows what you are thinking or feeling, or when you believe that someone else should know what you are thinking or feeling. The problem with this is that if you don't let those people in your life that are important to you know that they matter, they don't know that they matter.

Most have stopped being consciously aware and have turned on an autopilot and are merely drifting through life. Your mind is probably busy making lists, recalling events of the day, or thinking

ahead, and as a result are not fully attentive to the moment that is present. Being mindful enables you to be thoughtfully present with others.

## **Communicating Gratitude**

Having an increasing awareness of gratitude can have a ripple effect throughout your relationships. There is evidence that when you share your gratitude, whether, in kindness, words, or gifts, you nurture your relationships, helping them to grow stronger and closer. Knowing this, it makes perfect sense that you need to explore how you can convey your appreciation to those who matter the most to you.

While there is nothing wrong with expressing your gratitude by saying, "thanks a lot," or "nice work," these expressions of gratitude are often taken for granted and seldom convey the sincerity of the message as powerfully as you want.

## **How to Express Appreciation**

One way you can verbally express your appreciation in a manner that will foster connection in your relationships is by including three components in your expression: (1) observation, (2) sincere feeling, and (3) need.

1. In sharing your observation, you just state what you observe, like holding the door open, washing the dishes, or taking out the

trash. These everyday actions do make a difference, but they often go unacknowledged. Sometimes just letting someone know that you noticed can make a world of difference to that person.

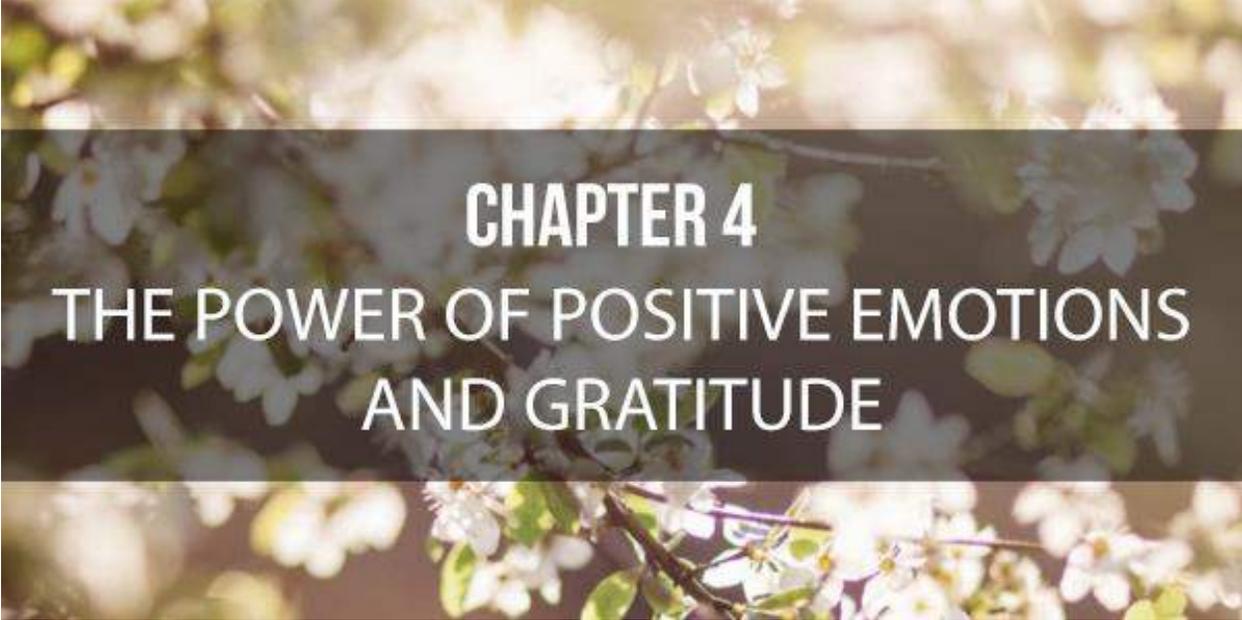
2. Next, you need to let that person know with a sincere voiced appreciation that what they did have a positive impact on you.

3. You acknowledge why it was appreciated. (What need it filled)

The final aspect of communicating gratitude is often times the trickiest. It can be difficult to acknowledge that you need others, but you do. It is important to remember that you don't exist in a bubble and that you are consistently affected by those around you. Letting someone know that they were there when you needed them is an open doorway to establishing a connection with others.

When it comes to thinking about your own relationships and opportunities for gratitude, don't limit your expressions of gratitude to the things that people give you or do for you. Sometimes it is just as valuable to share your appreciation for who they are as a person. Let the people in your life know that you not only appreciate what they do for you by who they are as well.

Take the time to comment on someone's generosity, thoughtfulness, compassion, or just being who they are, and see how much happier you become in your relationships.



## CHAPTER 4

# THE POWER OF POSITIVE EMOTIONS AND GRATITUDE

Wanting to be happy isn't an unrealistic desire. However, many seem to be misinformed about what happiness is. At times, you may think that you can find happiness in a new computer, a new shirt, or a new car. Other times, you may believe that indulging your impulses will make you happy. While these things in and of themselves aren't bad, you need to consider if any of these things have brought you true, lasting happiness.

A study of twins has demonstrated that approximately 50 percent of happiness levels are based on genetics. This means that there is some predisposition to happiness, but that also means that half of your happiness isn't wired into your DNA.

Another study determined that 10 percent of happiness is determined by life circumstances like wealth, relationship status, health, etc. This means that if 50 percent of your happiness can be

attributed to genetic makeup and 10 percent to circumstances, that leaves 40 percent of your happiness up to you.

This 40 percent means that you have a significant say in how happy you are. It's not all up to chance, or someone else's whims or intentions. You have a choice. So, what does this have to do with gratitude? Well, it turns out that research has shown that grateful people are indeed happier people. Gratitude can reduce the frequency and duration of depressive episodes because it is hard to feel bitterness, anger, envy, hostility, and resentment when you are feeling grateful. By its nature gratitude has the capability to block more negative and unpleasant emotions. When it comes to gratitude, it is essential for you to realize that the feelings you experience are valuable and serve a purpose.

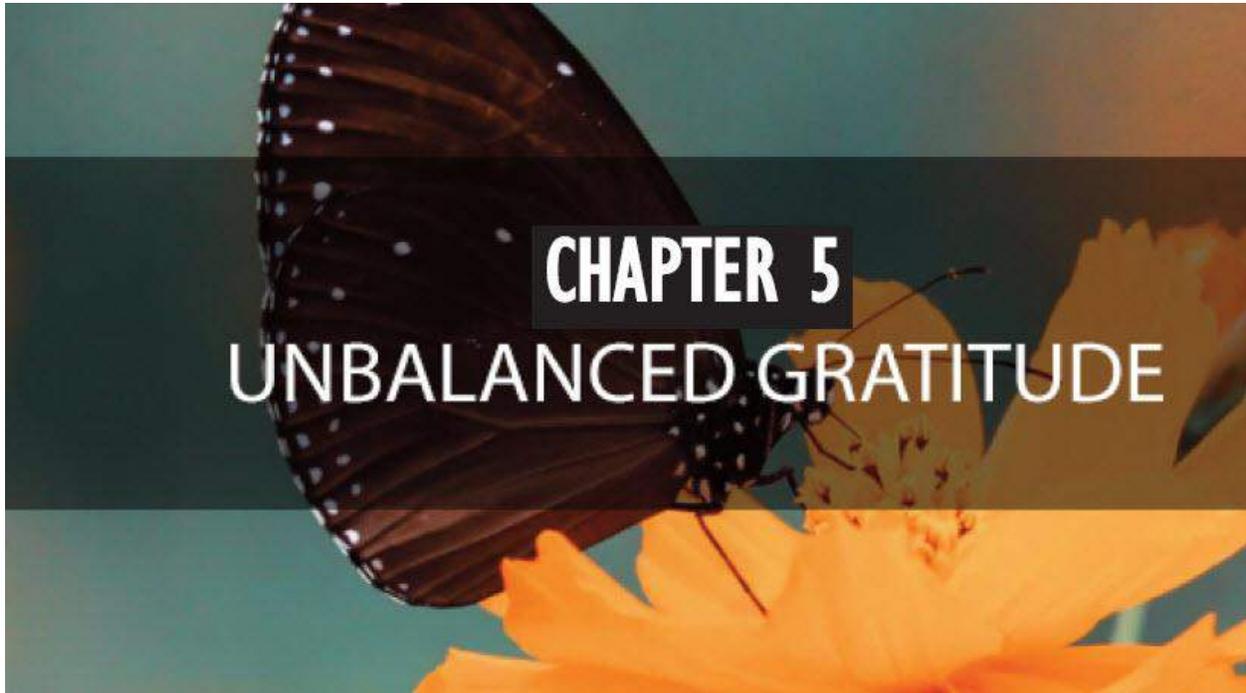
When you feel afraid, you may become anxious. This emotion puts your body in a state of alertness, so you're ready for anything and can grow in tune with our surroundings. Feeling anxious when you are walking down a poorly lit street at night, is an appropriate emotion and can help keep you safe. That same feeling of anxiety prior to speaking publicly can prompt you to prepare for the event, and help you to have an excellent presentation ready to go.

Emotions that are typically referred to as negative are merely more unpleasant to experience. Bitterness, sadness, guilt, regret, shame, envy, resentment, and anxiety are uncomfortable to experience, especially if you often have them.

Your mind is somewhat programmed to focus on these emotions and give them more of your attention. This is because these are essential emotions in that they give you valuable information about yourself and how you are responding to your environment. Without these emotions, you wouldn't know if there was danger lurking around the corner, or if you are viewing something that is opposed to your moral and ethical views. These particular emotions can prompt you into taking action. The downside to these specific emotions is that you can quickly get stuck there, and you can begin to find yourself living in uncomfortable places.

Gratitude and other positive emotions don't discount the negative experience but can help you keep things in perspective and keep you from getting stuck in those negative emotions. Practicing gratitude is one way to transform your experiences toward more positive emotions and improve your relationships. If you work with appreciation, you will begin to shift your experience toward the positive.





So far, you've discovered that gratitude has a number of positive attributes and benefits. You've learned that people who are grateful tend to be happier, healthier, and are more satisfied in and with their relationships. Gratitude opens you up to being able to connect with others and can help you through stressful situations and experiences. However, it is essential to understand that every light casts a shadow, and gratitude is no exception. It is entirely possible to experience, or at least express, something similar to gratitude without the benefits.

In order for gratitude to occur in your relationships, there has to be an exchange from one to another. There has to be a giver and a receiver, and there has to be an awareness of that exchange. When the awareness of the gift is not present, the exchange becomes

unbalanced. This can result in either a missed opportunity for gratitude or even a false expression of gratitude.

Unbalanced gratitude, or unhealthy appreciation, occurs when there is a sense that one should be grateful, but the feeling isn't there. It's the thought of, "I know I should be grateful, but I can't help but feel (guilty, awkward, suspicious, resentful) or some other variation of a feeling of unease.

### Superficial Gratitude

Superficial gratitude is one that is not genuine or from the heart. It occurs most frequently when there is public expectation or demand for acknowledgment. The best example of this is the yearly award shows that are aired on television. The words of gratitude are present, but the sentiment behind those words is sometimes minimal.

The challenge with this kind of gratitude is that it seldom makes you feel good. It doesn't come with the added benefits of the other emotions that are so often associated with gratitude; emotions of joy, happiness, love, connection, and even hope. Instead, superficial expressions of gratitude are often associated with a feeling of anxiety and resentment.

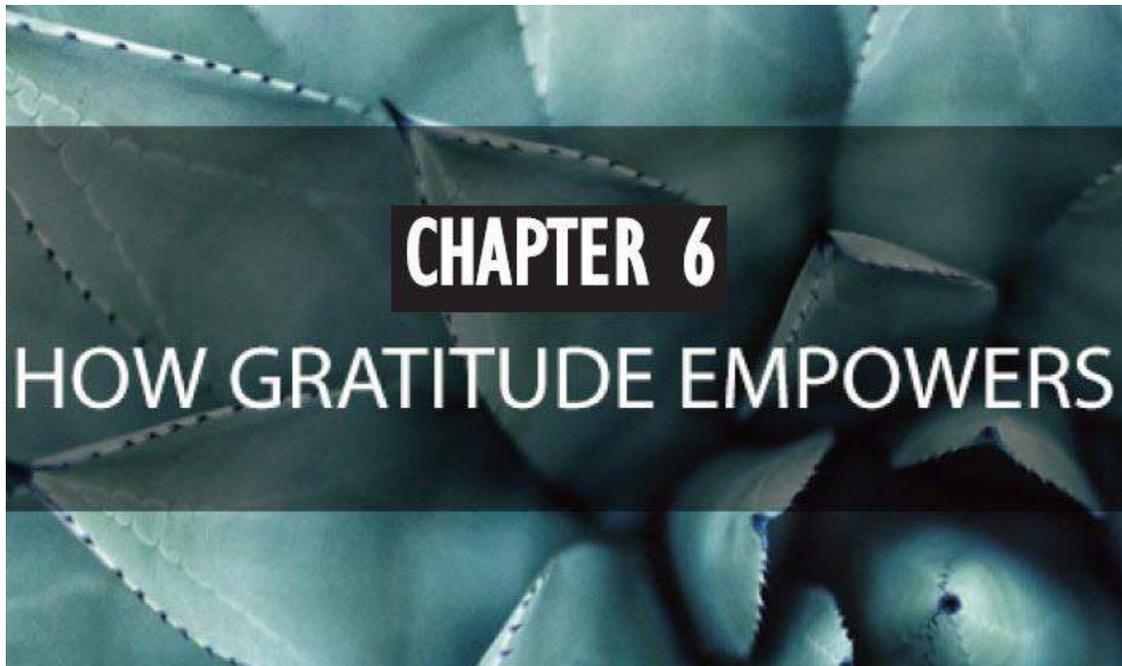
There are situations where you may feel pressured to offer thanks, even when you aren't feeling the emotion, which can lead you to another form of false gratitude.

### Obligatory Gratitude

Obligatory gratitude shares some similarities with superficial gratitude. There ends up being an overwhelming sense of “should” behind the expression of thanks, rather than a genuine feeling of appreciation. This kind of gratitude often occurs when you feel a need to say “thanks” for a kindness that was received, but one that wasn't wanted or needed. You may feel obligatory gratitude when you feel obligated to thank someone for a gift that you neither wanted or like, or when someone is doing something for you that you want to do on your own.

### Reestablishing Balance

Everyone, at one time or another, has experienced unbalanced gratitude. The critical thing to understand is that it is not true gratitude. Whether the false gratitude is stemming from cultural expectations or an intention to be perceived as better than another, it is missing the essential elements of the components that are necessary for gratitude to blossom in your life. If you find yourself engaged in an exchange of unbalanced gratitude, it is up to you to look for ways to restore the balance.



On a psychological level, practicing gratitude allows you to become happier, more positive, and more amenable to finding joy and pleasure in everything that we do. Showing gratitude for the things you have and those around you also has social advantages as well because you become more generous and compassionate in your dealing with the world.

Studies have shown that gratitude helps you on both psychological and physical levels. Physically, when you practice gratitude in your life, it can help to boost your immunity levels, which in turn can lead to you living a more healthy and energetic life. This can help to reduce the likeliness that you will fall ill and allow you to live a more active life.

Gratitude can empower you to understand better that life is all about the moments lived rather than continually looking out for the good or bad moments. Gratitude teaches you to be grateful for all the moments that make up your life.

For example, take the case of someone who has just been in a car accident that resulted in them being hospitalized with their leg in a cast. Now instead of moping about how they would have to stay in the hospital, the person is grateful that their life was saved and could look forward to catching up on some reading and the latest TV shows.

### Become More Optimistic

Gratitude can help you develop an optimistic and positive perspective about life, even with all of its ups and downs. Living life with gratitude will enable you to understand and appreciate that taking the rough with the unruffled patience is the key to your happiness, contentment, and peace.

Instilling an attitude of gratitude in children from an early age will help them value the blessings they have, leading them away from the current plague of the sense of entitlement that affects so many today. It has become far too easy for children today to take what they have for granted. This ingratitude ends up putting them on a path that is difficult for them to find peace and contentment,

which could impact their ability to having meaningful relationships in their lives, both at work and at home.

### Become More Thankful

The best thing about the empowering nature of gratitude is the fact that it makes you view your own self in a new light. The more thankful you are for everything that is good in your life, the less you will dwell on those aspects of your personal life that falls short. Gratitude will also make you a more empathetic person who can appreciate the achievements of others without feeling envious. This can free you up to focus on doing the things in your life that work for you.

### Become More Energized

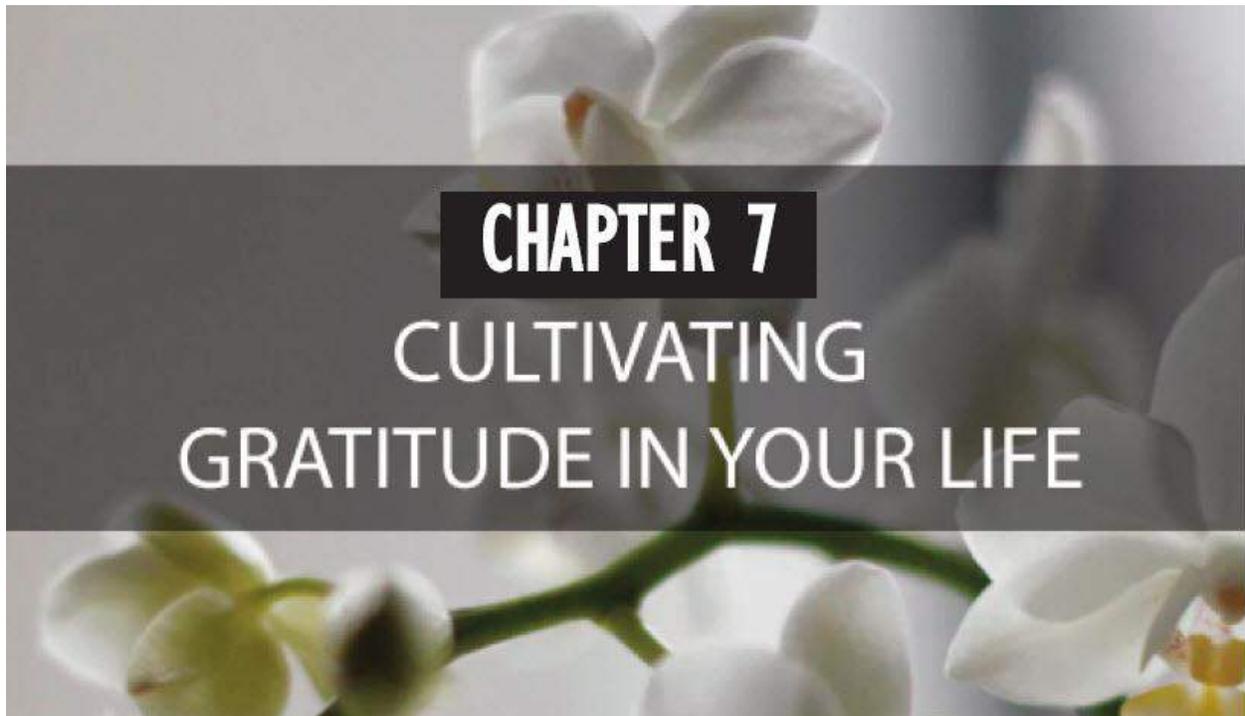
Among the many beautiful ways that gratitude can empower your life is the way that it ends up energizing your being. The very act of embracing the positive and letting go of the negative can make you view your life with hope and optimism, which provides you with enthusiasm to give your best in everything that you do.

Gratitude is like the sunshine that breaks through the window and illuminates the room when you open the curtains in the morning. Everybody has a need for this vital catalyst that can bring exciting wonder into your life.

## Find Meaning in Life

Life is more than the relentless pursuit of material possessions and achieving goals. Having a sense of gratitude for what you have and wishing the best for everyone else puts you on the path of self-realization. This, allows you to have contentment as a constant part of your life, as well as enables you to reach out to those who may need your help.





Thankfully, gratitude can be learned. With the right application of practice and discipline, you can master an attitude of gratitude in your life. The thing about gratitude is that it may not be all that challenging for most people to express when things are going well.

However, the moment a crisis occurs or an unhappy situation arises, people don't see much reason to be grateful. Many would rather complain about their life. The thing about gratitude, however, is that it is nothing more than a state of mind. You can, if you want, find a reason to feel grateful even in the darkest of hours.

No matter how terrible things may seem to be, there is always something for you to be grateful for. The thing to remember is that we are all on this planet for a short period, and as long as we live and breathe, we have something to celebrate. If things have gone wrong, you have to remember that they can also get better.

When you take some time to observe the way grateful people conduct themselves, you will start to notice some commonalities in their behavior.

### Have Realistic Expectations of Life

Life rarely happens in the way you expect. The best students in school don't necessarily do better in life. There are numerous instances where somebody less talented than you is able to land the job that you wanted, or who find more success than you. No one knows what sort of cards we will be dealt with in life. When you are prepared for the surprises that life will inevitably throw at you, you will always be able to find a silver lining and be grateful.

### Be Unconditionally Happy

When you put a prior condition on being happy you will likely never reach that happiness. If you covet a particular car, that's okay, but if you decide that you are going to be depressed until you get it, what would happen if it suddenly goes out of production and is no longer available?

**People who readily show gratitude for whatever good they see in their lives, no matter how small it is, are those who find it rather easy to be happy.**

**Unconditional gratitude is definitely one of the prerequisites for living a happy life.**

### Accept That Good Sometimes Comes with Bad

People that can appreciate that the good comes with the bad will find that their hearts are grateful for the good in life while realizing and understanding the fact that there will likely be a corresponding downside. They know that as they bask in the warm glow of the summer sun, that the bleak cold of winter is just around the corner. Conversely, if it is raining heavily, they know that it is just a matter of time before the sun will shine.

### Be Optimistic

People who find it easy to express gratitude for the smallest bit of happiness don't get fazed by the changes in life. They are eternal optimists who just need the slightest glimmer of hope to be happy and content. For them, tomorrow is another day.

Developing a habit of gratitude will require some attention and effort on your part. While shifting gratitude into a consistent practice does take effort, it is a worthwhile investment of your

energy. Research has shown that in addition to increasing your awareness of the abundance already present in your life, practicing gratitude gives you a wide range of benefits including:

- Improved ability to manage daily stress
- Increased optimism about the future
- A heightened sense of community
- Increased resiliency to traumatic events
- A heightened sense of emotional well-being
- Increased physical activity
- Improved sleep
- Improved physical health
- Reduction in feelings of depression
- Reduction in feelings of anxiety
- Positive impact on both cardiovascular and immune functions

It is critical to remember that habits take time to develop. There may be days where you forget about gratitude altogether. That's alright. You can pick up the practice again the following day. Over time, the practice of gratitude will become more automatic. Just like learning anything new, you have to give yourself patience and time to develop gratitude habits. With continued practice, you will notice the rewards in your own life unfold.

### Practice Giving

Entitled is a word that is used to describe many today. Entitlement is one of the most significant obstacles to gratitude. When you believe that everything is owed to you, how can you feel grateful or genuinely appreciative? This belief of deserving creates a wall that blocks gratitude.

As much as you live in a world where you are conditioned to give thanks, often without awareness, you also live in an age of entitlement, where more and more, people are finding themselves disappointed because they are not receiving what they believe they deserve. Believing that the world owes you anything is a false premise and will only lead you to experience disappointment, strains in your relationships, and further resentment and frustration.

So, the question becomes how you can shift from an attitude of entitlement to one of gratitude? There are several ways that you

can accomplish this. First, you can start by adjusting your own attitude and model a grateful attitude in your home. You can also teach your children about gratitude and giving rather than about deserving and owing. The key to teaching gratitude is to engage in activities and interactions that are focused on sharing, giving, and connecting rather than doing something in order to get something back.

### Writing Gratitude

As you look for ways to combat entitlement and foster gratitude in your life, you can look to the simple act of writing thank-you notes. Often, when people talk about writing thank you notes, they are taken back to when they were required to write obligatory thank you notes for graduations, birthdays, weddings. In these situations, the writing of thank you notes can feel a bit daunting and can quickly become overwhelming. With many of these situations, the gifts that are purchased are out of a social obligation, and the thank you notes are also written from a place of social responsibility. While this may not be representative of sincere gratitude, it is a positive step in moving toward developing gratitude habits, because it is a way to acknowledge gifts received.

With that, you can go a step further and move past obligatory gratitude and into reflective gratitude. Reflective gratitude happens when you are able to step back from a situation, recall the event, and re-experience the emotions that occurred during

that moment or span of time. Often, you may not realize the benefits that you are receiving from someone until after you have had time to reflect.

Thank you notes have a positive effect on those who receive them. Taking the time to reflect on the relationships you have developed, and the gifts that those relationships offer you can move you from a place of resentment or victimization into feeling appreciative of the gifts that you have received. It can also provide you with the opportunity to reflect on how you have affected those around you.

### Say Thank You

Try to write a thank you letter every month to let someone know how much you appreciate and value them. You could post it, hand deliver it or even read out loud to them. This is a wonderful way to show someone that you cherish them or a great way to nurture a new connection. A study in the journal *Emotion* found that sending a handwritten thank you note to a new acquaintance makes you appear like a warmer and friendlier person.

### Acknowledge the Bad

Importantly, life is not always a bed of roses. Don't try to block out difficult or sad times from your gratitude journey. By acknowledging the past and being thankful for working towards making your life better, you create a perfect space for gratefulness.

## Create a Gratitude Board

Put up a new bulletin board and start to pin things up on that you are grateful for. For instance, thank you cards and letters, tickets to a show or play that made you feel good, poems, quotes or piece of artwork. It can be anything you recognize as an expression of love and gratitude.

You don't need to practice gratitude alone. Gratitude is, after all, about relationships and exchange. You can create an attitude of gratitude within your home as a family activity.

- Keep a gratitude list for your family.

Place a whiteboard or sheet of paper on the refrigerator or some other easy-to-find location and have everyone in the family add to it daily. Things on the list can be big or small; it doesn't matter.

Choose one day a week to share the list together at a shared meal.

Create a new list each week.

- Gratitude Letter

There is always an opportunity for you to express your appreciation and gratitude, even if years have passed. Reflecting on those who have helped you in the past or present, and writing this down, can be a powerful means of cultivating gratitude.

Think of someone in your life for whom you feel grateful, but haven't yet thanked. Write a letter to this person expressing your appreciation for them. Let them know how they have affected your life. If possible, deliver the letter in person and read it to them before giving it to them.

- **Thank-You Notes**

Like the gratitude letter, the thank-you note is a compelling expression of gratitude. It allows you, as the recipient, an opportunity to savor the gift/benefit, and allows the person who gave you something the opportunity to feel recognized and appreciated.

Keep a box of thank you notes around and get in the habit of writing thank you notes. Write them for the unexpected, for someone who said something kind to you or helped you out when you needed it.

### **Do it Together**

Practicing gratitude doesn't have to be a solitary experience. Sharing it with others can strengthen connections and be a great way to remind you to do it. Make it part of your dinnertime ritual when you are together with partners, children, family, and friends. Take the time to talk and share your experiences of good things that happened to you that day. You can share anything, so if someone held a door open for you or your boss acknowledged your good work, or a stranger smiled at you on the train, these are

all positive experiences. Gratitude can be found in the smallest of moments like a someone sending you a text to tell you they miss you or an unconditional hug from your child. These all still count.

- **Meditation**

One of the most powerful tools to help train the brain to be more positive is through meditation. Regular practice can create new neural pathways that help mold the brain to be more grateful. For example, practicing meditation is a great way to cultivate gratitude as you focus on the present and experience it without judgement or criticism.

Another form of meditation aimed at developing deeper gratitude is called Naikon. Originally from Japan, Naikon when translated means “looking inside.” It is a powerful gratitude meditation as it asks the participant to reflect on their life and the world around them. When practiced daily this mediation have a profound impact on creating a deeper sense of gratitude for the world around you. As part of the meditation, you are asked to reflect on all aspects of your life from birth right up to the present.

There are many life-changing benefits that come from feeling grateful. However, gratitude is not a panacea for all life’s problems. There will be times that too much gratitude might hinder us rather than propel us forward in the best way.

- **Practicing Gratitude Meditation**

Gratitude meditation is one of the most influential and rewarding exercises you can do. When you're able to develop an attitude of gratitude you can start feeling more contented with your life and accomplish true happiness. Gratitude can make you feel good, and

meditation will help you to achieve a deep state of relaxation and contemplation.

Gratitude meditation can be incorporated together, or you can spend a few minutes at the beginning of your meditation session taking deep breaths while you think of all the things that you are grateful for in your life.

You can start your gratitude mediation practice by taking a few moments to do some deep breathing relaxation techniques. Start by breathing in through your nose. This will extend your abdomen and cause your diaphragm to pull air into the bottom of your lungs, which will provide your body with a healthy dose of oxygen, and helping you to become more relaxed.

When you're ready, sit in a comfortable chair, one that is suitable for meditation, and close your eyes. Allow your muscles to begin to relax. Let go of your thoughts. When you feel relaxed and comfortable start to think about everything that you are grateful for in your life.

The more that you are grateful for, the more you'll receive in your life. Whether you choose to practice gratitude meditation or gratitude relaxation and breathing on a regular basis the happier and healthier you'll be.

- Gratitude Meditation Journal Practice

For this exercise, you'll need a notebook or journal to keep by your bedside.

Each evening, prior to going to sleep, sit quietly and bring your attention to your breath, keeping your head relaxed.

If you are comfortable, close your eyes or soften your gaze at a fixed point on the ground about four feet in front of you.

Take a few deep breaths, paying attention to the inhale and exhale.

Think through the events of your day. Visualize those events as they occurred, be sure to pay close attention to moments that contained acts of kindness, laughter, or beauty. As you notice these occurrences, pay attention to how your body feels. Pay attention to the sensations that you are feeling. What kind of thoughts arise in your mind?

When you've completed reviewing your day, gently bring your attention back to your breath. Open your eyes and write down the observations in the journal.

- Gratitude Journal Practice

Start noticing the things that occur each day for which you are grateful. These things can be big or small; it doesn't matter. The magnitude of what you are identifying isn't essential, but instead that you are noticing things that you can appreciate about the day. You may be grateful for a person, for opportunities that were presented to you, for a good cup of coffee or tea, or perhaps that the day has come to a close and you are now preparing to lie in your bed and rest your head on your favorite pillow.

Every night, before you go to sleep, write down the things that you were grateful for throughout your day. Again, these can be big or small; it doesn't matter. Write down at least three things every day and once a week, sit down and review your journal entries.

- Gratitude Breathing

Even in the busiest of days, there are small moments where you can practice gratitude. Take a moment, two or three times a day, to slow down and bring your full attention to your breathing.

Notice each breath. Observe every inhale and exhale, noticing that at that moment you don't have to do anything but breathe. Once your breath has your full attention, silently say the words "thank you" on each of the next five to eight exhalations as a gentle reminder that right now, at this moment, you're okay. These silent

"thank you's" can serve as a quick reminder of the gift of your breath and how lucky you are to be alive. Do this practice at least three times per week.

- Gratitude Reminders

It is extremely easy to forget something, especially when you are trying to form a new habit. Placing visual reminders around your home or workspace can help you stay on track with your goals. Create reminders that will prompt you throughout the day to think about gratitude, or merely to pause and reflect. Here are some ideas for your gratitude reminders.

- Carry a small stone in your pocket. When you notice the rock, pause for a moment and reflect on gratitude.
- Place a note on your office wall, refrigerator at home, or bathroom mirror that says, "I am grateful."
- Set the alarm on your phone to go off one or more times a day as a cue to pause and reflect on gratitude.
- Schedule a five-minute "gratitude break" in your office calendar two or three times each week. Use the calendar reminder feature to help keep you on track.



# CONCLUSION

Here are a few things to consider as you embark on your own gratitude journey.

**Don't overdo it.** Studies have shown that practicing too much gratefulness can have the opposite effect. Don't put too much pressure on yourself to fill up your journal. There may times where you don't have anything to write and you can interpret this negatively, which is not what you want. Remember that gratitude is about quality, not quantity.

**Celebrate your own success too.** Don't let thankfulness overshadow your own contribution to success. Hiding behind others can be a sign of low esteem.

**Saying thank you will not solve all your problems.** There is a time and place for negative emotions. Sometimes anger plays an important role in healing. Don't brush everything under a carpet of thankfulness. Use gratitude to process your emotions but not the control them. A study found that anger helped romantic couples, who were facing a serious issue, to address their problems and find resolutions rather than just ignoring them. Likewise, if you are in a harmful relationship, trying to find the

good in the other person, is likely to encourage to remain with them rather than break free.

**Gratitude is not indebtedness.** The former is a positive emotion and the latter a negative emotion.

### **Try it**

Gratitude is not exclusive. Everyone can cultivate gratefulness in their life. It doesn't have to be a chore or something you must do. Grow an attitude of gratitude and it will slowly become part of your life. When you make time to focus on what you have, rather than spending all your energy listing the things you don't, you will open your eyes to the abundance around you and start on a journey towards to a better happier life.

For living a positive life, explore Jonathan's audio programs such as:

[Start the Day Great](#)

[Take Control of Your Life](#)

[Joyful Life](#)

[Live Passionately](#)

...and many more...

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