

The Spiritual Practice of Gratitude



To be grateful is to recognize the Love of God in everything God has given us-and God has given us everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of God's love, every moment of existence is a grace...Gratitude therefore takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and to praise of the goodness of God. For the grateful person knows that God is good, not by hearsay but by experience. And that is what makes all the difference.

-Thomas Merton

Gratitude Together

Gather with others in a circle. For ten minutes go around the circle answering the question:
I feel grateful for...

Each time it is your turn, hear the question anew. Let what arises in the moment be spoken. Be present to each other. Really listen and absorb what is said. At the end of ten minutes, reflect upon the experience.

Gratitude at the End of the Day

At the end of a day, take a few moments to answer any or all of these questions. You may choose to share your responses with another.

The greatest blessing of this day has been...

Something that made me smile...

An encounter that opened wide my heart...

That for which I am grateful...

Thank God for the blessings you have noticed and for those you have yet to recognize.

Gratitude Journal

Keep a gratitude journal. Write down five things you are grateful for each day.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**"If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, 'thank you,' that would suffice."
-Meister Eckhart**

Three Things I am Grateful for...

Three things I am grateful for...

Three things I am grateful for and rarely give thanks...

Three things I struggle to be grateful for...

Grateful Pause

Take a moment to give thanks for your breath, for your body, for the people who care for you, for your spouse, children, friends, co-workers, for the colors of the day, for your work, for your home, for your food. Notice what happens in your body as you practice giving thanks. Draw the energy of gratitude throughout your whole body. Feel every cell in your body smiling and opening to new energy.

Breath in: gratitude...Breath out: blessing

Gratitude Before a Meal

When you sit down to enjoy a meal bring your awareness to the food and people.

Breathing in, I'm aware of the food on my plate.

Breathing out, I'm fortunate to have food to eat.

(Aware of food. Feeling grateful.)

Breathing in, I'm aware of the fields.

Breathing out, I smile to the fields.

(Aware of the fields. Smiling.)

Breathing in, I'm aware of the many conditions that brought this food to me.

Breathing out, I feel grateful.

(Aware of conditions. Feeling grateful.)

Breathing in, I'm aware of those eating together with me.

Breathing out, I am grateful for their presence.

(Eating together. Feeling grateful.)

-Thich Nhat Hanh

Gratitude before me,
Gratitude behind me,
Gratitude to the left of me.
Gratitude to the right of me,
Gratitude above me,
Gratitude below me,
Gratitude within me
Gratitude all around me.

-Angeles Arrien

Much has been written about the power of gratitude. Research shows that training our gratitude muscles expands generosity, benefits children, helps us heal faster, enhances spirituality and makes us more resilient in the face of struggles. While an occasional grateful thought is helpful, to be truly transformative, gratitude should be practiced multiple times each day, until it becomes as effortless as breathing.