



APPRECIATION PRACTICES

Living on autopilot, with the body doing one thing whilst the mind busies itself working through our to-do lists, worries, and plans for the future, can limit the attention we give to those things that are actually 'okay', 'good' 'comforting' 'supportive' 'beautiful' 'uplifting', or truly 'inspiring' right now.

“Attention is like Teflon for pleasant experiences but like Velcro for unpleasant experiences. Our brains evolved for survival and reproduction, rather than for happiness and peace of mind. This biological heritage seems to have left us with a natural tendency to give plenty of attention to what’s wrong and to what might be a threat. Noticing and giving time to what is lovely doesn’t flow so easily for most of us, especially when we’re under stress, but there are steps we can take to train ourselves to bring awareness to the lovely and nourishing aspects of our lives.

Just making a mental note that something is pleasant, uplifting, or beautiful can be helpful. Much more powerful is to pause and appreciate and bring awareness to the details of physical sensations, feelings, thoughts and impulses that arise. By learning to ‘turn good facts into good experiences’ in this way, we can deepen the appreciation and gratitude that we have for these enjoyable moments and thus increase the nourishment that they give us. The intention is that this can become a part of your everyday life.”

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Which activities, things, or people in your life make you feel okay, good, comfortable, supported, or uplifted? Gratitude practices enable us to bring appreciative attention to these aspects of our lives and incline the mind towards looking at our experiences in a different light.



The Five Finger Gratitude Practice

Take some time at the end of each day to reflect on what has been okay, good, supportive, and uplifting. What made you smile, laugh, feel steady, or comforted?

- Settle yourself in a comfortable posture. Gently close your eyes and bring your attention to where the body is making contact with the surfaces beneath it. Tune into the sensations of sitting or lying here in this moment, of feeling whole and supported.
- Take a few deeper breaths, in through the nose and out through the mouth before
- Gently holding the thumb of left hand between fingers of right.
- Now, bring to mind something in your home that gives you a sense of wellbeing, comfort or happiness. Or, something you appreciate because it makes your life that bit easier. It could

be a favourite cup, your pillow, the kettle or your power shower! It doesn't have to be a big thing, it can be small, and quite 'everyday'.

- Notice if the mind starts to scrabble around for the 'best fit' item. And as best possible, just smiling to this, letting the mind settle on one thing, even if it doesn't feel 'quite right'.
- Then, as best you can, holding the image of that item in the mind's eye, appreciating it and how it supports you, and then tuning into any felt sense of appreciation you notice in the body. Turning a good fact into a good feeling. Where in the body do you feel appreciation? Is this a strong or subtle sensation?
- Breath in, breath out.
- Then taking the second finger of your left hand, bring to mind something outside your home that you have a sense of appreciation for. It doesn't have to be a big thing, it could be a tree in your garden, a favourite plant, or bench. Or maybe an interesting building or park nearby. Bringing to mind something outside and near your home that you feel appreciation for. Holding this object in your mind's eye and tuning into any felt sense of appreciation in the body. Turning a good fact into a good feeling.
- Breath in, breath out.
- Then take the third finger, and bring to mind a person you feel a sense of appreciation for. Someone who supports you, or makes you smile. Someone who perhaps offers little gestures of kindness or seems to know the right thing to say. And knowing that relationships can be complicated, that nobody is perfect, and that the mind can sometimes be picky about who to choose, perhaps tuning in to a particular quality that you appreciate about someone you know. Then holding this person and this quality in the mind's eye, tuning into any felt sense of appreciation in the body, turning a good fact into a good feeling.
- Continue the practice by selecting 2 more things to be appreciative of, perhaps an activity from your day, a pet, a nice meal, a hot bath and so on. These don't need to be big things. Each time, as best possible tuning into the felt sense of appreciation in the body.

In time, extend the practice to ten fingers. Getting to 10 items each day can seem like a tall order, and even a little contrived. But remember, the intention is to gently encourage the mind, to incline the mind towards seeing things in a different light. This doesn't mean we ignore the day's difficulties or any challenging emotions that have arisen, but we give the mind and body an opportunity to counterbalance those with the direct experience of what is okay, good, supportive and uplifting. We give ourselves the opportunity to nurture a more balanced outlook and sense of wellbeing.