



Empowering You Organically - Season 8 – Episode 60

Title: Top 10 Ways To Become More Grateful From The Leading Expert on Gratitude and Happiness

Hosts: Jonathan Hunsaker, TeriAnn Trevenen

Description: Gratitude undeniably improves our well-being. Science proves it! Last week we tackled the science of gratitude. Tune in this week for 10 ways to become more grateful. There are some interesting suggestions here - you don't want to miss it!

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The Expert on Gratitude

- Robert Emmons, who has a PhD and is the leading scientific expert on gratitude, shares a lot of really good information. He is a Professor of Psychology at the University of California – Davis and the founding Editor-In-Chief of the Journal of Positive Psychology. He has

authored many books around gratitude and happiness and emotions and positivity, and this is his top 10 list for becoming more grateful.

Top 10 List for Becoming More Grateful

1. Keep a gratitude journal.
 - o Establish a daily practice in which you remind yourself of the gifts, grace, benefits, and good things you enjoy. Setting aside time on a daily basis to recall moments of gratitude, associated with ordinary events, your personal attributes, or valued people in your life, give you the potential to interweave a sustainable life theme of gratefulness.
2. Remember the bad.
 - o To be grateful in your current state, it is helpful to remember the hard times that you once experienced. When you remember how difficult life used to be and how far you have come, you set up an explicit contrast in your mind, and this contrast is fertile ground for gratefulness.
3. Ask yourself three questions.
 - o Utilize the meditation technique known as Naikan, which involves reflecting on three questions: "What have I received from __?", "What have I given to __?", and "What troubles and difficulty have I caused?"
4. Learn prayers of gratitude.
 - o In many spiritual traditions, prayers of gratitude are considered to be the most powerful form of prayer, because through these prayers, people recognize the ultimate source of all they are and all they will ever be.
5. Come to your senses.
 - o Through our senses, the ability to touch, see, smell, taste, and hear, we gain an appreciation of what it means to be human and of what an incredible miracle it is to be alive. Seen through the lens of gratitude, the human body is not only a miraculous construction, but also a gift.
6. Use visual reminders.
 - o Because the two primary obstacles to gratefulness are forgetfulness and the lack of mindful awareness, visual reminders can serve as cues to trigger thoughts of gratitude. Oftentimes, the best visual reminders are other people.
7. Make a vow to practice gratitude.
 - o Research shows that making an oath to perform a behavior increases the likelihood that the action will be executed.
8. Watch your language.
 - o Grateful people have a particular linguistic style that uses the language of gifts, givers, blessings, bless, fortune, fortunate, and abundance. In gratitude, you should not focus on how inherently good you are, but rather on the inherently good things that others have done on your behalf.
9. Go through the motions.
 - o If you go through grateful motions, the emotion of gratitude should be triggered. Grateful motions include smiling, saying thank you, and writing letters of gratitude.
10. Think outside the box.

- If you want to make the most out of opportunities to flex your gratitude muscles, you must creatively look for new situations and circumstances in which to feel grateful.

Homework from Jonathan: Exercising Your Gratitude Muscle

According to UCLA's Mindfulness Awareness Research Center, having an attitude of gratitude changes the molecular structure of the brain, keeps the gray matter functioning, and makes us healthier and happier. When you feel happiness, the central nervous system is affected. You are more peaceful, less reactive, and less resistant. Now that's a really cool way of taking care of your well-being as you go through not just the holiday season but the rest of your life.

Joan Moran, from UCLA Recreation's FITWELL program, wrote an opinion piece in 2013 for the Huffington Post where she discussed positive benefits of an attitude of gratitude.

We want to help you exercise your Gratitude Muscle this holiday season! So, we're sharing her timeless tips with you today. And challenging YOU to incorporate this into a daily practice this holiday season....and beyond!

The following questions (and their honest answers) will help you grow your attitude of gratitude during the holidays:

Ask **who** in your life — past and present — has given you inspiration, motivation, love, support, and guidance.

These people can be family, friends, teachers, mentors, or work colleagues. You carry these people around like angels on your shoulders because they are always giving you energy. Take a moment to acknowledge them and give thanks that they are in your life. You can follow up with a note or phone call of thanks to let them know that they matter to you.

Ask **what skills**, talents, personal characteristics, values, beliefs, and education opportunities you utilize every day and are you grateful for.

The one stable gift that I am grateful for is my ability to teach. This is the gift I cannot live without because it leads to other fabulous learning and knowing experiences as well as different skill sets. You will recognize your greatest talents and gifts by reflecting on the values and beliefs that you live by and personal characteristics that you have developed. Ask yourself what gift keeps on giving for you. What gifts will change your life mightily?

Ask **where** you have been in your life that has deeply affected you emotionally, intellectually, physically or spiritually.

In what ways have experiences outside your normal daily activities positively influenced your life? It is likely you have experienced some travel during your life. The places you visited, the people you met, perhaps from other cultures have broadened your life, influenced your view of the world and affected your sense of self within your community. Take time during the holidays and reflect on how these powerful experiences have shaped who you are today.

Ask **how** you normally express your gratitude.

Do you express gratitude daily? And if you are not taking the time to do so, why not? It is easy to forget to say thank you because our lives are so busy and filled with "to-dos" and "musts." Make it a habit at least twice a day to find a quiet place to pause and say thank you for your gifts. Reach out to friends by phone

or email to say thank you to them for being in your life because they cherish you and give you support and love. Acknowledge and be grateful for your loving community.

Ask what **negative situation could be a positive** in your life.

Why should you be grateful for the negative things that happen to you in life? Life isn't perfect. Bad stuff happens. But inside every negative experience is a positive experience waiting to happen. Eliminating the negative self-talk, you put yourself through develops stronger mental health habits. It allows you to become more accepting of everything that happens in life — the good, the bad, and the ugly. And the process of removing negativity creates the opportunity for growth and transformation.

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Deeper Dive Resources

Robert Emmons

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/profile/robert_emmons

The Science of Gratitude by the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley

https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC-JTF_White_Paper-Gratitude-FINAL.pdf

Pause, reflect and give thanks: the power of gratitude during the holidays

<http://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/gratitude-249167>

UCLA's Mindfulness Awareness Research Center

<http://marc.ucla.edu/>

Counting Blessings Versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/images/application_uploads/Emmons-CountingBlessings.pdf

Expanding the Science and Practice of Gratitude

https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/what_we_do/major_initiatives/expanding_gratitude

Naikan Method

<https://www.naikan.eu/english/naikan-why.html>

Does gratitude writing improve the mental health of psychotherapy clients? Evidence from a randomized controlled trial

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10503307.2016.1169332?scroll=top&needAccess=true&journalCode=tpsr20>

Neural correlates of gratitude

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

What Does a Grateful Brain Look Like?

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_does_a_grateful_brain_look_like

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