

## Gratitude List

Years ago, I had an interesting experience in a meditation class run by one of my mentors, Stephen K. Hayes. The class was held in the evening, so I had already had a long, intense day of working. It was also an hour away, so I had to fight rush hour traffic to get to the class. I made it literally at the last second, just as someone was locking the door so the class could begin meditating without interruption.

As soon as I sat down, Mr. Hayes began leading us through a meditation on gratitude. He asked us to reflect back over the day on all of the positive or pleasant events we had experienced. Since I had just been frantically dodging traffic, I could not come up with a single positive thing at first. However, as my mind began to settle, a memory suddenly popped up that I had enjoyed the taste of a cup of coffee that morning. I then remembered that breakfast had been rather tasty. I then remembered that my very young daughter had told me a cute joke that made me laugh out loud. Before long, my mind was flooded with countless small moments of pleasantness. When I was feeling stressed, they were not readily available to my mind, and I may not have even been very aware of just how pleasant those things were as I was experiencing them.

When you are in a particular mood, thoughts and memories related to that mood are more easy to access. When you are feeling stressed, the brain is more likely to bring to mind things that are stressful. **By consciously paying attention to the good things in our lives, we can overcome the automatic tendency to look for the negative.** Research has shown that even writing down a few things that you are grateful for even once a week can increase your happiness.

In the space below, write down the people, things, and experiences that you are grateful for. Ideally, find a quiet, peaceful place to sit and allow your mind to open up a little. It may feel a little forced at first, but watch to see what comes up for you. Look back over this list from time to time to renew your appreciation. If you repeat this exercise once a week, you might even notice the pleasant side effect of your happiness increasing a little.

People I am grateful for:

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Things I am grateful for:

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Experiences and memories I am grateful for:

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I am also grateful for:

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