

GRATITUDE MEDITATION

Difficulty: **CASUAL** | Frequency: **1X/DAY** | Duration: **10 MINS**



WHY YOU SHOULD TRY IT

If you're accessing a gratitude meditation online, you probably have much to be grateful for in life. But we don't always pay attention to these good things: We often take them for granted, or spend our mental energy on the problems and stressors we're facing.

This Gratitude Meditation can not only shift your focus to the gifts in your life but also boost your positive feelings. If you already have a gratitude practice, the Gratitude Meditation may help you truly feel and experience the *emotion* of gratitude. If you already meditate, this feel-good exercise can add some variety to your mindfulness practice.

TIME REQUIRED

10 minutes. Although most meditation practices are recommended daily, you may see benefits in as little as one session.

HOW TO DO IT

This exercise draws on a guided meditation created by Dr. Kathi Kemper, executive director of the Ohio State University College of Medicine's Center for Integrative Health and Wellness.

We recommend listening to audio of this guided meditation in the player below; you can also listen at the [Ohio State University website](#). We have included an adapted script of this meditation to help you follow it yourself or teach it to others. In brackets are the lengths of the pauses in the original guided meditation, to give you a sense of how much time to allot to each step.

Gratitude Meditation

Hello and welcome to the 10-minute guided practice to promote resilience by using imagery of heart-centered gratitude.

This is Dr. Kathi Kemper at the Ohio State University's Center for Integrative Health and Wellness.

Gratitude practice can be used to promote a positive mood, hope, and resilience. As we experience positive emotions such as gratitude, loving-kindness, and compassion, our awareness broadens and our creativity and problem-solving capacities blossom, and we become more effective in whatever we choose to do.

1. To begin, find a safe, quiet place where you know you will not be disturbed. Please don't listen to this recording while you are driving.
2. We will keep track of time for you, and ring a gentle chime when 10 minutes have elapsed [start timer].
3. Sit upright in a comfortable, stable position where you feel fully supported, and your back, neck, and head are straight. Or lie down on your back in a comfortable place, with some support under your knees. Make sure you'll be warm enough. You might want to get a sweater or blanket if the room is cool. Loosen any restrictive clothing that would prevent you from breathing comfortably.

4. Allow your eyes to gently close or maintain a soft focus, gazing 6-12 feet in front of you.

5. Take a slow, deep breath to bring yourself to the present moment and begin the process of feeling more peaceful and centered. Breathe into the belly so it expands as you breathe in and gets smaller as you breathe out.

6. Now, take a minute or two to mentally scan your body for any areas where there is tightness, tension, or soreness and breathe your warm, oxygen-filled breath into that area; as you breathe out, let the tension release, breathing it out.

7. Now, notice any worries, fear, anger, irritation, jealousy, or judgment. Just breathe into those emotions, noting them, and allowing them to flow out as you breathe out. Another breath into any uncomfortable emotions, and breathing out, releasing them [5 seconds].

8. Now any thoughts of memories, plans, associations, anything other than being here, breathing, just breathe into those thoughts, and as you breathe out, allow the thoughts to flow out with the breath [5 seconds].

9. Now that our bodies, emotions, and thoughts are a little clearer, a bit more spacious and open, we can begin to focus on the events, experiences, people, pets, or possessions for which we feel grateful [5 seconds].

10. First, recall that if you are listening to this recording, you already have several marvelous gifts:

- The gift of life itself, the most precious gift. Someone gave birth to you, someone fed you as an infant, changed your diaper, clothed you, bathed you, taught you to speak and to understand.
- The gift of hearing, so you can hear and learn—whether it's the song of a bird, the notes of a band or orchestra, the songs of singing and voices, the sound of your own breath flowing in and flowing out.
- The gift of a heartbeat, steady, regular, moment after moment, pumping fresh, life-giving blood to all your organs [5 seconds].

Now think about all the things we have today that make our lives easier and more comfortable than they were for our great-grandparents.

- We flip a switch, and light appears.
- We turn a tap and clean, drinkable water flows.
- We adjust a thermostat, and a room grows warmer or cooler.
- We have a roof to keep us dry when it rains, walls to keep out the cold wind, windows to let in the light, screens to keep out insects.
- We enter a vehicle and it takes us where we want to go.
- We have access to machines that wash our clothes. And we have clothes to wear, places to store them.
- There are machines that store our food at just the right temperature and help us cook it without us having to gather wood.
- We have indoor plumbing.
- We have public libraries that have thousands of books and recordings, free for anyone to borrow and read.
- We have public schools that can teach us to read and write, skills that were available to only the very few just a few hundred years ago [5 seconds].

Now, take a moment to reflect on all the thousands of people who have worked hard, some without knowing you at all, to make your life easier or more pleasant.

- Some who plant, grow, and harvest your food.
- Some who transport that food to market.
- A team of people who make the roads and railways that make it easier to transport the food.
- Another team who maintain those vehicles. And drivers, loaders, unloaders.
- Those who take the time to design the store, the shelves, the packaging that keeps the food safe and allows you to find what you need.
- Postal service. Someone who sorts the mail. Others who deliver it.
- Those who maintain the servers so you can get and send email and access the Internet.
- Those who design operations and systems for gathering, sorting, and disposing of trash and recycling.
- Those who gather news stories and photos, and those who create the many mechanisms by which the news can reach you.
- All those who play sports, create art or music, or plays or poems or films to entertain and uplift you.

And most of these are people you have never met or barely know.

11. Now, consider the people and pets you know who enrich your life, those who smile at you and cheer you on, those family, friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and peers, those ancestors who worked so you could live well, those friends who support you when you need a shoulder or a hand [5 seconds].

12. Now, take a moment to reflect on your own reasons for feeling grateful in this moment [15 seconds].

13. There is so much to feel grateful for in this moment now [10 seconds]. Gratitude fills our hearts and minds, uplifting our spirit [10 seconds].

14. When you finish [CHIME], you can notice the feeling of your body and breath in this place. Rest quietly for several minutes, noticing how you feel throughout your body, emotions, and thoughts compared with before you started. No judging, just noticing. Gently stretch your hands and arms, feet and legs. If you choose to stand, do so slowly. With practice, you can find yourself feeling grateful easily, wherever you are. You may choose to keep a journal, noting three to five things each day for which you feel particularly grateful. You can draw on the strength of this gratitude whenever you wish.

15. Thank you for practicing this guided heart-centered meditation to promote a sense of gratitude.

EVIDENCE IT THAT WORKS

Rao, N. and Kemper, K. J. (2017). [Online training in specific meditation practices improves gratitude, well-being, self-compassion, and confidence in providing compassionate care among health professionals](#). *Journal of Evidence-Based Complementary & Alternative Medicine*, 22(2): 237-41.

In this study, 165 participants spent an hour learning about gratitude meditation and its scientific benefits, trying out the practice, and getting tips to integrate gratitude into their daily life. Afterward, they reported feeling more grateful.

WHY IT WORKS

This meditation combines mindful awareness of the body, thoughts, and feelings with prompts to reflect on the things in life we may feel grateful for.

Simple [mindful breathing](#) has benefits on its own, such as helping us cope better with negative experiences. By adding a gratitude component, this meditation may also generate positive feelings, which are good for our resilience, performance, and relationships. On a physical level, gratitude meditation lowers our heart rate and may impact areas of the brain related to emotion regulation and motivation (compared to feeling resentful).

In the long run, as Dr. Kemper notes in the meditation, the attitude of gratitude can be a strength that we draw upon in our lives when we need it.

SOURCES

[Kathi Kemper, M.D.](#), Ohio State University

FOR MORE

Kyeong, S., Kim, J., Kim, D. J., Kim, H. E., and Kim, J.-J. (2017). [Effects of gratitude meditation on neural network functional connectivity and brain-heart coupling](#). *Scientific Reports* 7: 5058.

