





HARBOR



Gratitude is one of the most powerful emotions has the potential to override other negative emotions such as anger, frustration, sadness, or envy.

If you can truly embody gratitude, you can overcome the difficult emotions that arise when you criticize yourself or your life for not being "better".

Take a moment today to acknowledge one thing you are truly grateful for - either by writing it down, telling a friend, or sharing it with your family.

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At the end of your day, do you typically focus on the negative and all the things you wish had happened differently?

Practicing gratitude is a way to ensure that the positive parts of your day are not overlooked and that you can find something good in each situation you are faced with.

At the end of the day, consider what did not go as you wanted it to, and find one thing to be grateful for in that situation.

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Oprah Winfrey once said: "Be thankful for what you have, and you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you do not have, you will never have enough."

If you can appreciate what you already have and acknowledge the good in your life, then ultimately, you will feel more fulfilled.

What in your life are you most grateful for right now?

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There are benefits to involving partners, children, friends, and coworkers in your daily gratitude practice.

This way others are helped by hearing how they might have contributed to something that someone else is grateful for.

Take the time to sit with your partner, family, or co-workers to each share one thing for which you are deeply grateful.

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## Research suggests that a gratitude practice is most powerful when written.

You may choose to keep a journal in which you list at least one thing that you are most grateful for each day or perhaps write a card to tell someone why they are appreciated.

Which form of written gratitude - journaling, writing a card, or sharing a post on social media - will you try today?

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Doll 9

Everyone wants to feel appreciated and acknowledged for the work that they do.

Veterinary care providers are no different – receiving thanks from a client, co-worker, boss, or colleague can make a tremendously positive impact on a person's job satisfaction.

Consider sending a WAVE (We Appreciate Veterinarians Everywhere) as part of the Harbor.vet initiative to spread gratitude and joy in the veterinary profession – visit Harbor.vet/wave to learn more.

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Expressing gratitude to someone is even more meaningful when a specific reason is given.

For example, "I am so grateful to have you on my team - your smile every morning creates such a positive start to my day".

What specific feedback could you offer someone today to show them why you are grateful?

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# Practicing gratitude does not have to be grandiose.

In fact, sprinkling small moments of gratitude for seemingly mundane things during the day can make a massive difference in your happiness overall.

Thank a serviceperson for doing something that makes your day brighter or acknowledge a routine task that a partner or family member does around the house.

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You cannot always rely on your clients to fill your gratitude bucket.

It's better that you look to yourself and your colleagues, to demonstrate gratitude to others on the team regularly.

Have a gratitude jar in the break room or have a gratitude wall in the hallway that allows team members to share why they are grateful for individuals who they work with.

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You probably spend most of your day "doing" things, rushing through your day, wondering where did the time go?

Mindfulness is an intentional state of "being", which allows you to pay attention to each moment.

Identify times in your day when you are on "autopilot" compared to others when you are "present" to everything that is happening.

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Using mindfulness to focus your attention on the present moment has proven benefits for mental health and physical wellbeing.

Anxiety (and all its physiologic consequences) usually stems from thinking about the future, whereas depression or rumination are a result of dwelling on the past.

The next time you find yourself wondering about the future or ruminating on the past, take a moment to bring your attention to something in front of you to redirect yourself to the present.

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| your day, you can use the STOP acronym to practice mindfulness. | Г |
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| Stop  |   |

Take a breath

Observe what is in front of you

Process and proceed.

Try to use the STOP acronym today to interrupt the hurriedness of your day.

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# Day 13

You probably spend much of your day multitasking or dividing your attention between different responsibilities simultaneously, which makes focusing on the task at hand more difficult.

The antidote to this multitasking habit begins with learning to focus on the present by practicing mindfulness.

The next time you are multitasking and feel like you are "spinning your wheels", can you stop and pick one thing to concentrate on and finish that task to its completion?

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The practice of mindfulness includes intentionally paying attention to everything that is coming up in the present moment while incorporating specific attitudes.

These include non-judging, non-striving, acceptance, patience, trust, letting go, and a beginner's mind.

When you notice a thought or feeling coming up, try not to judge it as "good" or "bad" - it simply is.

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Robert Holden says: "The more you strive and search for happiness the more you overlook the possibility that it is here already".

Non-striving means being in the moment with whatever is happening, rather than trying to change it.

Can you identify moments of striving in your life and consciously choose to let things be?

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"Serenity comes when you trade expectations for acceptance"

Acceptance is allowing things to be the way they are, even if you wish they could be different.

What is one thing in your life that you wish were different, but that you could consciously choose to accept as it is?

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"Patience is not the ability to wait but how you act while you're waiting". Joyce Meyer

In the context of mindfulness, patience is understanding and accepting that things happen in their own time.

What is something in your life you have felt impatient waiting for, and could you move into letting it happen on its own?

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"A bird sitting in a tree is not afraid of a branch breaking, because her trust is not in the branch, but in her own wings".

Trust is knowing that everything is happening for a reason and that you have everything you need right now.

Be mindfully aware of your "gut feeling" so that you can follow your intuition when necessary.

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It is easy to hold on to stories, events, relationships, and other things that have impacted you throughout your life.

You may also hold on to certain things at work (e.g., outcome of a case, relationship with a client) which prevents you from being in the present.

Could you decrease your attachment to certain stories, relationships, or outcomes in your work or home life by consciously letting go?

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"In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, in the expert's mind there are few" Shunryu Suzuk

Having a beginner's mind allows you to experience situations as if you are doing so for the very first time, thereby removing comparisons, concerns, or anxieties.

Consider going into an appointment with a difficult client or engaging in a challenging task as if you have never done it before.

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Neuroscience research shows that practicing mindfulness regularly can enhance the brain's grey matter within the pre-frontal cortex, which is responsible for holding attention, making decisions, moderating behavior, and solving problems.

Mindfulness also shrinks the amygdala, which identifies physical threats and emotional triggers.

Try to identify situations or events that trigger reactions in you, and notice the thoughts, feelings, or behaviors that arise at those times.

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Mindfulness forms an emotional buffer that creates the space to choose adaptive responses during stressful situations, rather than reacting mindlessly with patterned behaviors.

Ultimately mindfulness allows you to respond in ways that are kind, open-hearted, and calm amidst the chaos of the situation.

During a situation that would normally be triggering for you, take a moment to pause and choose a measured response such as taking a breath, walking away, or asking for a minute to gather your thoughts.

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Research in the human medical field demonstrates that mindfulness training helps human nurses cope more effectively with stress by improving their ability to think clearly and remained focused and calm during stressful situations.

Mindfulness training also promotes self-awareness and self-care among human medical students, physicians, and nurses, thereby reducing the risk of professional burnout.

Consider signing up for a mindfulness training program in the form of an 8-week mindfulness-based stress reduction program (MBSR) or an online class teaching mindfulness techniques.

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A study on stress in veterinary students demonstrated that students who performed a 5-minute breathing exercise before performing surgery were calmer and more relaxed than students in the control group.

Using simple breathing exercises during the day anchors awareness in the present moment and is a beneficial mindfulness tool.

For 2 to 3 minutes between appointments, during breaks, or while commuting, focus on your breath by being aware of the sensations of breathing or counting your breaths.

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Most people take shallow breaths and are in a state of sympathetic activation (stress response) throughout their day.

Taking deep breaths that fill your belly and have a prolonged exhale can help to activate the parasympathetic nervous system and enhance feelings of rest and relaxation.

Try to lengthen the duration of your exhales so that they are longer than your inhales - for example, counting your in-breath for 2-3 seconds and counting your out-breath for 3-4 seconds or longer.

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Day 26

People benefit most from having a formal mindfulness practice using guided recordings they listen to every day.

This can include a seated meditation, body scan, or yoga practice that you can do at home or in the car before or after you go into work.

Consider downloading an application such as Calm, Insight Timer, or Breethe that allow you to listen to guided formal mindfulness practices.

For free guided meditations, go to: Harbor.vet/30-day-challenge-gratitude-mindfulness/

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The benefits of a meditation or other mindfulness practice increase the longer in duration you practice.

However, practicing every day, even if for short sessions, is more likely to create a habit than practicing every once in a while.

Plan to complete a short (5-10 minute) mindfulness session at the same time every day – either soon after you wake up in the morning, before or after work, or before bedtime.

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An informal mindfulness practice happens anytime throughout the day when you wish to heighten your awareness and fully experience the present moment.

You can do this by focusing on your senses during activities during the day.

During work (e.g., eating lunch or scrubbing for surgery) or home activities (e.g., folding laundry, washing the dishes) notice the physical sensations, sounds, smells, and visual stimuli that accompany those tasks.

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# Day 29

During moments when you feel anxious or distressed, mindfulness can be a powerful anchoring tool to ground you in the present moment to stop the troubling thoughts.

The 5-4-3-2-1 exercise is a great tool to use during these difficult moments.

In your immediate environment count:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can hear
- 3 things you can touch
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

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You may find yourself focusing on what you wish to change about yourself or your life. But in doing so, you may overlook the many things that you already have going for you, the obstacles you have overcome, or the milestones that you have achieved.

What is one thing this year that you are grateful for, whether it be a difficulty you conquered or an accomplishment that you reached?

Watch videos about Gratitude & Mindfulness with Dr. Holowaychuk: Harbor.vet/30-day-challenge-gratitude-mindfulness/

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