

Gratitude Journal

Write occasionally, but do write regularly. Your preference could be every other day, Mondays and Fridays, or simply once a week but commit to write in your gratitude journal at a regular time. It's important to create a physical record, so be sure to write down what went well— don't simply do the exercise in your head.

Consider creating a prayer space in your house for this exercise. Place a cross or crucifix nearby or even an icon or a religious picture. Make this space one that helps you enter into a prayerful mindset that is conducive for reflection.

Write down as many as five things for which you feel grateful for in the week. The things you list can be relatively small in importance (“the tasty sandwich I had for lunch on Tuesday”) or relatively large (“my sister gave birth to a healthy baby boy on Saturday”). As you write, follow these instructions:

1. Begin with prayer, and ask God to help you review your day and see those moments in which you experienced gratitude.
2. Be as specific as possible—specificity is key to fostering gratitude. “I'm grateful that my spouse brought me soup when I was sick on Tuesday” will be more effective than “I'm grateful for my spouse.”
3. Go for depth over breadth. Elaborating in detail about a particular person or thing for which you are grateful carries more benefits than a long but superficial list.
4. Get personal. Focusing on people to whom you are grateful has more of an impact than focusing on things for which you are grateful.
5. Try subtraction, too. Rather than just tallying up all the good stuff, consider what your life would be like without certain people or things. Be grateful for the negative outcomes you have avoided, escaped, prevented, or turned into something positive.
6. See good things as gifts. Thinking of the good things in your life as gifts guards against taking them for granted. Try to relish the gifts you've received.
7. Savor surprises. Try to record events that were unexpected or surprising, as these tend to elicit stronger levels of gratitude.
8. Revise if you repeat. Writing about some of the same people and things is okay, but if you do, zero in on a different attribute or aspect.
9. End your time by thanking God for your day and what you are grateful for and invite God to be with you tomorrow.