

practicing gratitude



A GUIDE TO
naming the good in every day life



this might sound crazy,

but the simple practice of keeping a gratitude list has quite literally changed my life.

Throughout a 20 year battle with chronic illness, it has helped to keep me grounded, present, & learning to thrive even amidst severe pain.

The biggest thing you need to know about gratitude is that it's a CHOICE, not a feeling.

& that it's a lot more powerful than many people realize.



the science behind it

When we express gratitude our brain releases dopamine & serotonin -- the two neurotransmitters mainly responsible for our emotions & the ones that make us feel 'good'.

By consciously practicing gratitude every day we can strengthen these pathways in our brain making them easier to access & therefore creating a more permanent state of gratitude. This doesn't mean you will always FEEL grateful, but it does mean that the choice will begin to come a little more easily.



01 *Decreased anxiety*

Our brain is unable to focus on negative and positive information at the same time, which means that if you are training your brain to focus on the good it will naturally decrease a feeling of anxiety in your body.

02 *Increased coping mechanisms*

Life is hard. We all know this & there is no way around it. So it's up to us how we choose to move forward. Gratitude can be an incredible tool, particularly in the hardest & darkest seasons of life, that keeps you putting one foot in front of the other

03 *Improvement in overall health*

Gratitude has been clinically proven to help decrease symptoms of depression & chronic pain, improve sleep, and boost immunity. Gratitude is not just a cliché word we throw around in the Fall, it's a lifestyle that can change your life.

how do i start?



Time

Set aside a designated time each day to sit down with pen and paper to begin your gratitude list. Buy a new journal, grab your favorite pen, find a quiet corner & set a timer for 15 minutes each day. It might take you awhile to get going, but that's okay. It will get easier!



Intention

There are days this will feel even more like a choice than others. Stick with it! Even if you have to dig a little, there is good to be found in your day. Maybe it's as simple as this 15 minutes of quiet that you intentionally carved out for yourself. Try to name at least 5 things. You can do this!



Practice

The more you practice, the easier this becomes! You are training your brain, and the more you do it the stronger that muscle will become. Be patient with yourself if it feels awkward at first! You are learning and all new things take time.



5 DAYS OF *practice*

DAY 1

Today, focus on the people in your life. How have they loved you in the last few days? A hug, an encouraging text, an act of service. Name 5 people & what they've done to help you feel seen & known. Take it a step further & let them know! They'll feel loved by this

DAY 2

This one is all about how you've grown. Think back on who you were 5 years ago, last year, or even 6 months ago and celebrate the growth in yourself. Name the good you see in yourself! Healthier boundaries, more joy, less anxiety? List it out.

DAY 3

Notice your surroundings today. What does the sky look like? How does the sun or the breeze feel on your skin? What do you hear around you? Is there a favorite blanket or sweatshirt that makes you feel a little cozier and safer? Notice the way your surroundings can affect you.

DAY 4

What are your "ugly beautifuls"? This is what one of my favorite authors, Ann Voskamp, calls the things that are achingly hard, but lead to the most bountiful growth. What are the cracks in your life where the light shines through? For me, it's a body that battles chronic pain because it has taught me to fight to stay joyful regardless of circumstance.

DAY 5

Write whatever comes to mind today! Your gratitude muscles are slowly getting stronger & this is only just the beginning. Notice if today feels a bit easier than Day 1? That's growth! I'm proud of you.

friend,

I don't know what your life looks like right now or what your days hold, but I do know that contentment and joy are possible. Right where you are. That might sound unattainable to you & that's okay. I'll believe it for you until you can, okay?

We'll use weary hands to put pen to paper & name the good until our hearts can rest in it. We'll do it together. & slowly you will begin to notice that life feels a little lighter.

Your circumstances may not change, but you can make the choice to flourish regardless. It's not an easy choice, but it's possible. I fully believe it starts with gratitude.

I am cheering you on!

- anna

"I want to see beauty. In the ugly, in the sink, in the suffering, in the daily, in all the days before I die, the moments before I sleep."

-- Ann Voskamp