



Integration: GRATITUDE LETTER & VISIT

“If the only prayer you say in life is ‘thank you,’
that would suffice.” - *Meister Eckhart*

We all have people that have made a huge difference in our lives, such as a friend, teacher, coach, or a family member. Unfortunately, we often don't express gratitude to them, even though it can be a mutually enriching gift to do so. **Your Integration this week is to write a letter of gratitude to someone you care about and has made a difference in your life.**

Who is someone that made your life better, but you have never properly thanked? Take 15-30 minutes to write a genuine thank you to that person that explains how they made an impact on your life and why they are important to you. Include specific details, and aim for 250 words or so.

Then deliver your letter to the person you would like to thank. Just ask to talk but don't tell them why ahead of time. If done in person during COVID-19, practice appropriate safety protocols. Whatever the format, read your letter aloud. Be ready for emotions to flow on both sides. Writing (and giving) a gratitude letter can be a truly powerful exercise because of its potential to strengthen our social connections and increase our awareness of the positive aspects of our lives.

EXAMPLES

There are many ways to write a gratitude letter. Just be honest, genuine, and specific. Take a look at any of the examples below:

- [An Experiment in Gratitude | The Science of Happiness](#)
- [Calling to Say Thank You | The Science of Happiness](#)
- [Students Tell Their Teachers What They Really Think](#)

GRATITUDE LETTER TIPS

- **Humility:** Expressing gratitude to another can be challenging, especially as it makes us vulnerable. But this activity has proven to be almost universally powerful and worthwhile and a mutual gift to giver and receiver.
- **Concreteness:** Try to be specific about something you are grateful for to another person. When did this person make a difference in your life, and how did that make you feel? Where were you? What did they do or say?
- **Honesty:** Speak from the heart. Take some time to share what means most to you.



“Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again — rejoice!... Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand.”

1 Philippians 4:4-6

SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS

- **Gratitude and Healing:** The practice of gratitude can decrease stress and depression, improve relationships through more frequent forgiveness and expression of thankfulness, and lead to a general increase in self-esteem and well-being.¹
- **Gratitude and Well Being:** A review of all 24 VIA strengths found that gratitude was by far the single most predictive of a person’s well-being.² In addition, the “three good things” form of gratitude journaling has been shown to improve happiness and well-being.³
- **Gratitude and Healthy Relationships:** Grateful people also sleep more, engage in more prosocial behaviors like helping others and volunteering, and in general feel more connected to their community.⁴

“Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others.” - Cicero

¹ Tannenbaum, Melanie, “[The Health, Happiness, and Heart Helps of Expressing Gratitude](#),” *Scientific American*, 25 Nov. 2015.

² Kaufman, Scott Barry, “[Which Character Strengths Are Most Predictive of Well-Being?](#),” *Scientific American*, 2 Aug. 2015.

³ Seligman, M. E., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005), “[Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions](#),” *American Psychologist*, 60(5), 410.

⁴ Research compiled and summarized in “[Gratitude Defined: Why Practice It?](#),” *Greater Good Science Center*, UC Berkeley.