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# gratitude

## FIVE DAILY HABITS TO INCREASE WELLNESS AND HAPPINESS

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*“As you become more grateful, your internal perspective transcends.  
Compassion and self-empowerment drive your thoughts and actions towards  
happiness and success.”*  
– Bernadette Wilson

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Bernadette Wilson, MBA

These lessons are the result of research conducted by Bernadette M. Wilson, MBA,  
the inspirational leader and founder of Cognitive Performance®

# COMMIT TO GRATITUDE



Congratulations! By reading this eBook, you are beginning the journey to implement one of the easiest and surest ways to make a positive impact on your life – *Practicing acts of Gratitude!*

As you commit to implementing the five Cognitive Performance gratitude exercises in this book, your view of the world will change. You may find that you begin to see the world through a softer and more powerful lens. With this new awareness, your outward attitudes and actions will reflect more positivity and optimism, while the inner you becomes more peaceful and confident. In gratitude, without exerting extra effort, you will naturally help others to have a more enriched life as well!

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*Gratitude is a reliable and safe domain for enrichment of the spirit. It is a place to return to for clarity and inspiration in identifying what is important to you.”*

*– Bernadette Wilson*

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# GRATITUDE'S REWARDS



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*If you want to make rapid, positive changes in your life,  
practice gratitude.*

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As you form the habit of gratitude, you are developing a deep sense of awareness for yourself and others that presents opportunities for you to be more connected to yourself and others. Brain studies have shown that acts of gratitude result in higher activity levels in the hypothalamus. This is important because the hypothalamus controls a wide array of essential bodily functions, including eating, drinking, and sleeping. It also has an influence on your metabolism and stress levels<sup>1</sup>. As you practice the Five Cognitive Performance Habits of Gratitude, take special notice of the subtle changes that you are experiencing. You may be quite pleased and surprised...!

## Positive Outcomes of the Emotional State of Gratitude

- It helps to remove thoughts of negativity
- Increases optimistic thoughts of joy and kindness
- Diminishes stress and likelihood to feel overwhelmed.
- Improves self-esteem
- Improves sleep and desire for physical activity
- Activates the creative brain centers, allowing for new possibilities

# A NEW PERSPECTIVE



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*Gratitude expands our perspective and our approach to life and our relationships.*

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From a core foundation of gratitude, all is possible. You will begin to approach life with more wisdom, kindness, and personal power. When you return to this natural state of being, your eyes open. You begin to view life from a positive perspective. Practicing to be thankful in the moment can be as simple as relishing with gratitude the feeling of the sun's warmth on your back.

## What You'll Need to Develop Your Habits of Gratitude

- A quiet space to reflect.
- A notebook or journal to write your thoughts.
- A pen or pencil

## How to Prepare

- Before each exercise, take a few minutes and take 6 deep cleansing breaths.
- Allow yourself to become calm with a quiet mind and a heart ready to lean towards gratitude



# HOW TO MAKE GRATITUDE A HABIT

*CUE \* ROUTINE \* REWARD*



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*Gratitude is easy and rewarding,  
but it can be challenging to remember to do...*

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To help you to form a daily habit of gratitude, here are three simple practice techniques to help you succeed.

1. Think of a **CUE**. A cue is a short thought or simple action that triggers you to become thankful without a lot of effort, such as twisting around a ring on your finger, stroking your hair, or thinking of your favorite vacation spot. Associate the cue's action (or thought) with the reminder to enter into the habit of gratefulness.
2. Establish a **ROUTINE** of gratitude practice. Start by setting a time aside to open this eBook and practice one of the five exercises.
3. The final step is important! Select a **REWARD** for completing the exercise by choosing something that brings you pleasure and is easy for you to obtain. The brain loves the joy derived from rewards! The reward can be as simple as making a to-do list that includes the checked off item "Complete Daily Gratitude."

Once your practice is complete, deeper benefits can be received if you use a journal and write down your observations, feelings, and any other insights you may have.

# HABIT ONE: RESILIENCE AND RESOLVE



Habit One is the daily exercise of reflecting on successes you have had, or missions you have taken to completion, that required you to deploy resilience and resolve.

To begin the first exercise, think about a time in your life that you are proud of. It can be a positive, happy event or one that brought you discomfort, but through your perseverance you succeeded. Feelings associated with pride are self-conscious feelings that are connected to how you feel about *yourself*, rather than another. For ultimate well-being, it is beneficial to acknowledge your unique strengths that you used (and have) to achieve your goals and overcome life's obstacle. In gratitude, the awareness of personal achievements is recognized fully, and thus, we become more confident and self-aware.

## Exercise One: Resiliency & Resolve

1. Take out a pen and paper and create a column on the left side of the page where you can write down five challenges you've encountered over the course of your life.
2. Write down what the challenge was, how it made you feel, when it occurred, and how long it lasted.
3. Now, start filling in the right column. Only this time, write down the joys and lessons each challenge brought to your life. What did these challenges allow to come into your life? How did these challenges allow you to move forward to become the person you are today?
4. Take time to appreciate all that challenges can bring us in our lives. Take time today to be grateful that the hard times have happened and that you have grown. It's okay to be thankful they are in the past, too!

# NOTES

## HABIT TWO: GRATITUDE NOTE



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*The act of sending a simple, thankful note to another can make a significant difference in your life and in the quality of your relationships with others.*

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A recent study on the effects of the expression of gratitude on neural activity found that when individuals participated in gratitude letter writing, they showed behavioral increases in gratitude. They also showed significantly greater neural modulation by gratitude in the medial prefrontal cortex three months later.\*

Expressing gratitude to others has a positive impact on our relationships, increases reciprocity, and decreases distress. Today, I want to challenge you to invite others into this mindset by expressing your gratitude to them.

However, expressing thankfulness to others isn't always easy, especially if people have been difficult to communicate with or may have caused you pain. But, remember, gratitude is a feeling that can be openly shared.

**Who would you like to send a note to for their contribution to your happiness or success?**



## Exercise Two: The Gratitude Note

1. Grab a pen and paper and address the top of the letter to a person you are grateful for. It can be a friend, a partner, a family member, a co-worker, or maybe a mentor. Whoever has had an impact on your success and happiness, this is for them.
2. Start the note by sharing with them that you have been thinking about them and the impact that their acts of kindness and support have had on you and your life. Share with them that you want to express your gratitude towards them with this note.
3. Share with them reasons why you are thankful for them. Use specific examples and cite memories you have shared together, and/or lessons you have learned from them.
4. Thank them for what they have done in your life.
5. If you're feeling extra brave, I challenge you to send them this letter. Imagine how you would feel receiving something like this. A letter of heartfelt gratitude makes both the writer and the recipient feel the love and happiness. Spread the love of gratitude to them.

## NOTES

# HABIT THREE: BODY & MIND APPRECIATION



Our body and mind can handle so many of the day-to-day operations that we often take for granted. Expressing gratitude towards your own great mind and strong body improves self-confidence and internal strength. By recognizing the abilities of the body and mind, and then by expressing gratitude for any physical and mental challenges you may have had to overcome, dramatically changes your perspective.

*The body and mind are extraordinary!*

They perform many functions automatically without our conscious awareness. Exercise Three brings self-awareness to our body, its movement, and its fluidity. As you become more aware, you start to shower your body and mind with gratitude.

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*Power up your Cognitive Performance with Gratitude!*

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Health not only comes in the form of physical health, but also mental health. As warriors, we wake up each morning ready to take on the day. Regardless of what is in front of us, we know that meditation, exercise, and eating right all enhance our well-being. Taking on this challenge is a testimony to the strength and willingness that is needed to improve thinking and the brain's overall health and cognitive performance.

Whether you believe you want to lose weight, become healthier, be stronger, or have insecurities that get in our way of your success, come back to the emotional baseline of gratitude. Thank your physical body for your ability to move, and your mind for its ability to think, solve problems, and to communicate with compassion. This challenge may feel awkward or insignificant, however, it encourages the habit of self-appreciation and helps to develop the confidence needed to obtain any goals you may have laid out moving forward.

**What would you like to thank your body and mind for today? What steps do you take to improve your physical and brain health?**

*Here are a few peak performance brain habit suggestions:*

*Exercise regularly. Eliminate sugars from your diet. Allow for time to read educational books and articles.*

## **Exercise Three: Gratitude for Our Bodies and Cognitive Abilities**

**This exercise will get you moving! You will be encouraged to do a physical action to bring self-awareness to your body and mind as you move throughout the day.**

This could be in the form of taking an exhilarating walk, attending a yoga class, or playing soccer outdoors with your children. You can also do this challenge in the comfort of your home.

If you decide to stay indoors to do this challenge, take a few minutes to slowly move your body – first your arms, then your legs. One-by-one, very slowly, lift each part of your body. Notice the sensations or any thoughts that may arise as you feel the weight of your limbs. Appreciate your abilities and your strength. Appreciate any soreness you may feel as well. Be mindful and aware of each movement your body is making and all that you are able to do.

Finally, after either of these movements or planned exercise, practice gratitude. **Reaffirm with gratitude how amazing your body is...!**

Another way to enjoy this practice is by paying attention to what you eat to nourish your body. Maybe this means not eating sugar or flour today, or skipping that tempting cupcake. Make a mental note on how this feels to refrain from an unhealthy desire. What type of thoughts arise? What is the tone of your internal voice? Is it critical, or is it supportive and encouraging? As you do this, you are bringing awareness to your cognitive abilities.

Thank yourself for your strength and the ability to refrain from eating food that does not support optimal health. Savor this positive experience.

And, yes, thank your brain for its ongoing function and effort! Give yourself gratitude for showing up to the fitness class, for taking the time to go for a walk, for doing this challenge, and/or for feeding your body right.

# NOTES

## HABIT FOUR: SELF-APPRECIATION



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*Take time to focus on the most important person - that is you!*

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Often, we're our own biggest critic, and it's always so easy to think of things about ourselves that we wish were different. However, focusing on the parts you love about yourself is essential to increasing confidence and self-esteem and helping us sort through our experiences to determine our passions. Plus, as you practice this exercise, you may find a new adoration for those parts you aren't proud of.

Recently, I read a poem called "Learn to be Grateful" by poet Edgar Albert Guest. Guest was known as the "People's Poet" due to the uplifting nature of his poems. His words in "Learn to be Grateful" eloquently painted the picture of showing appreciation for a rose's bloom, and taught readers to, "*Acquire the grateful habit, learn to see how blest you are.*" In the gracious state of gratitude, you can access a deep understanding of your nature; like the rose, we are all just a blend of different colors and varieties - no two are the same. The poem is provided for you on the next page.



## *Learn to be Grateful*

By  
Edgar Albert Guest

Be grateful for the kindly friends that walk along your way,  
Be grateful for the skies of blue that smile from day to day;  
Be grateful for the health your own, the work you find to do,  
For round about you there are men less fortunate than you.

Be grateful for the growing trees, the roses soon to bloom,  
The tenderness of kindly hearts that shared your days of gloom;  
Be grateful for the morning dew, the grass beneath your feet,  
The soft caresses of your babes and all their laughter sweet.

Acquire the grateful habit, learn to see how blest you are,  
How much there is to gladden life, how little life to mar!  
And what if rain shall fall today and you with grief are sad;  
Be grateful that you can recall the joys that you have had.

## Exercise Four: Gratitude for the Self

Before you begin today's exercise, please take a moment to obtain the needed materials and get settled. Set a timer for 3 minutes on your phone, and during that time get to a place of relaxation and thankfulness. Close your eyes, sit alone, and take deep breaths. Get to a place of focus and where you feel centered.

1. Spend 1-3 minutes to draw a flower or a tree. Include the flower's stem or the tree's trunk, the branches, the leaves, and/or the petals. Imagine the plant's roots and the soil. Then, draw what you see in your mind's eye.
2. At the roots, write down lessons you've been engrained with or things you've always carried with you.
3. On the stem or branches, write down ways you've grown, how your family and upbringing created you to be, and any challenges you've encountered along the way.
4. For each leaf, write down accomplishments.
5. Write down words that showcase goals you've met, people you've influenced, and wonderful things you've done.
6. On each petal or leaf, write a kind word about yourself. In the middle of the flower or the heart of the tree, write your name.
7. Stand back and look at how all of your experiences, thoughts, and values made a beautiful flower or a majestic tree.
8. Then, take a step back and imagine what they would look like as a bouquet, as a green forest, or with all of the other things you weren't able to write down.

Practice gratitude and recognizing positive things about yourself. Thank yourself for things you've done for the better and forgive yourself for things you've done for the worse.

# NOTES

## HABIT FIVE: ACTS OF KINDNESS



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*The best things in life should be shared!*

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Share what you have learned about gratitude.  
Perform an act of kindness for another person.

Acts of kindness are small acts done *purposefully* without expectation of a reward or recognition. They are small steps taken to improve the lives of those around us. This deep place of gratitude leads to a happier life that can easily be shared. Studies have shown acting with kindness has a positive impact on our neural activity, resulting in less stress and an overall improved sense of well-being.

**Exercise Five: Practice one act of kindness without someone knowing it.**

This could be paying for someone's lunch that may be standing in line behind you, dropping off flowers on an elderly neighbor's doorstep anonymously, or making an anonymous donation to the charity of your choice. Whatever you choose, make it something that resonates with your inner values and is meaningful to you.

## One small act can make a *significant* difference in another's life.

As you perform your act of kindness, take note of the sense of compassion, love, and/or empathy you may feel for the receiver.

Afterward, take 5-6 slow deep breaths. Reflect on your kind act. Embrace any positive emotions or images that come to mind. Then, take 3 minutes to write about your experiences in your journal. Why did you decide on this act? How did it make you feel? Would you do something similar again? If so, why?

Continue to reflect and savor your experience throughout the day. As you do this, you are creating a neural "imprint" of the experience that makes it easier for you to return to this place of goodness with less effort. The results may include an increased sense of personal satisfaction, self-confidence, and love!



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## About the Author

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**Bernadette Marie Wilson**, MBA, NeuroCoach, and CEO of Cognitive Performance, a consulting and coaching system that uses scientific based neuroenhancement strategies to inspire and heal. Bernadette is a gifted coach, writer, and speaker who specializes in professional and personal empowerment and optimization. She works with individuals and large corporations in need of inspiration and resilience training. Her company, Cognitive Performance, integrates NeuroCoaching principles along with her 20+ years in corporate leadership and personal wisdom gained from transcending loss in her own life.



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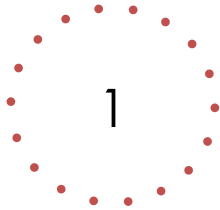
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## *Your Exclusive Gratitude Thank You Gifts!*

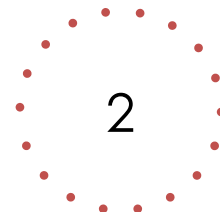


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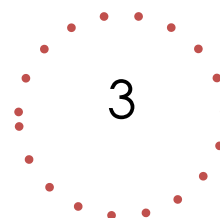


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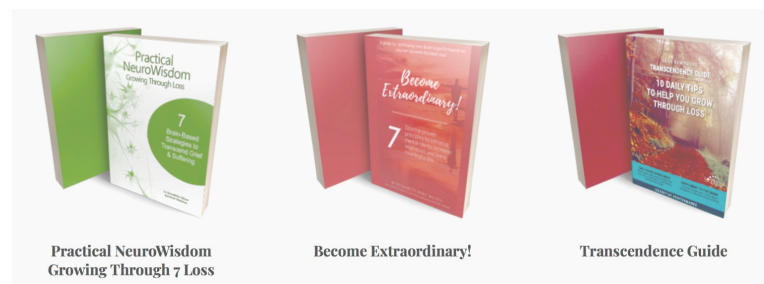
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# NOTES

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