



Family Connection Mentoring
Gratitude = Happiness

Ten Exercises to Increase Gratitude and Happiness:

Use some prayerful consideration and choose just one exercise from the list. Be open to the Spirit and He will direct you to the action step that will work best for you, right now. Practice it consistently.

Dr. Robert Emmons, a professor at the University of California, Davis, and one of the leading scholars in the scientific study of gratitude, said the following:

It is possible that psychology has ignored gratitude because it appears, on the surface, to be a very obvious emotion, lacking in interesting complications: we receive a gift—from friends, from family, from God—and then we feel pleasurably grateful. But while the emotion seemed simplistic even to me as I began my research, I soon discovered that gratitude is a deeper, more complex phenomenon that plays a critical role in human happiness. Gratitude is literally one of the few things that can measurably change people's lives.

Robert A. Emmons, *Thanks! How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 2.

1. Come up with own Happiness commandments.

When I created my own Happiness Commandments I began by asking myself, “What makes me the most unhappy”, and then I came up with three commandments for myself. I post them where I can see them and be reminded of what kind of thinking leads me to happiness.

2. A Gratitude Journal – Every day write in a journal the things that you are grateful for. I made it a goal to write 10 things every day.

President Henry B. Eyring said, “I wrote down a few lines every day for years. I never missed a day no matter how tired I was or how early I would have to start the next day. Before I would write, I would ponder this question: “Have I seen the hand of God reaching out to touch us or our children or our family today?” As I kept at it, something began to happen. As I would cast my mind over the day, I would see evidence of what God had done for one of us that I had not recognized in the busy moments of the day. As that happened, and it happened often, I realized that trying to remember had allowed God to show me what He had done.

Dr. Emmons found scientific proof that people who practice gratitude through activities such as keeping a gratitude journal are more loving, forgiving, and optimistic about the future.

They exercise more frequently, report fewer illnesses, and generally feel better about their lives. In subsequent studies Dr. Emmons also reported that people who regularly kept a gratitude journal and were in the habit of recognizing and expressing gratitude for their blessings reported feeling closer and more connected to people, had better relationships, were more likely to help others, felt less lonely, felt less depressed, slept better, and were more pleasant to be around.

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3. Journaling. This is similar to the gratitude journal, but in this case, detail in writing, one positive experience each day. This will help you find meaning in the activities of the day, rather than just noticing the task itself.

4. Dedicate a few prayers a week to only gratitude. Ask for nothing; just be grateful for what you already have.

- If you can't walk – do you have a wheel chair
- If you can't see – can you hear
- If you feel you are too old – you are yet alive and can serve
- If you don't feel accepted – you have the opportunity to reach out
- If you are single and alone thank him for family, friends and your home teacher
- If you are having trouble with your spouse thank Him for the opportunity to develop more Christ Like traits through forgiveness and taking personal responsibility

Make every prayer a Thoughtful Prayer.

- Thank Him for His goodness to you.
- Thanking Him for all that He gives you, be specific and detailed
- Thank Him for His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.
- Express thanks for the Savior's great example, for His teachings, for His outreaching hand to lift and help, for His infinite Atonement.
- Thank the Lord for His restored Church.
- Thank Him for all that it offers you.
- Thank Him for friends and family. Be specific and detailed.
- Be specific in thanking Him for His goodness
- Thank Him for leaders and teachers

5. Control negative thinking - Use the Getting On Top Of Negative thoughts handout

Ray L. Huntington a professor in the BYU Department of Ancient Scripture, “Studies have shown that focusing on the negative in times of adversity—using derogatory or critical words as we talk to ourselves or others—can darken our mood and, much like a virus, infect the moods of those we interact with. Consciously choosing to fill our minds with thoughts of our blessings and feeling appreciation for those blessings can change the way we feel and brighten our spirits during difficult times. Even spending a few minutes thinking about our blessings—even numbering them—as we walk from class to class can add a little sunshine and encouragement to our lives. It's so simple, yet so powerful.

October 02, 2012, BYU Devotional, A Grateful Heart, Ray L. Huntington

The handout is pretty self explanatory but if you have questions you can email me. The email is on this handout.

6. Add More Thank-Yous to Your Vocabulary

Saying “thank you” to someone brightens your day by affirming your positive feelings. It also lifts the spirits of those who are deserving of your thankfulness. Use peoples names who check you out at the grocery store, people who help you on the phone and anywhere else you happen to be and see a name tag. Say thank you.

7. Take Time to Write Thank-You Notes and Letters of Appreciation to People Who Have Blessed Your Life

Home-school-coach.com

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John Kralik, an attorney with a struggling law practice and personal family problems, determined to reverse the cycle of negative thinking through writing and sending one thank-you note each day of the year—365 thank-you notes in total. His note-writing endeavor taught him a valuable lesson: blessings can be easily overlooked unless we are consciously thinking about them each day. To that end, note writing helps us identify, remember, and express our blessings.

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8. Live in the Present Moment and Try to Give Thanks for Small Blessings Encountered Every Day of Your Life – I call it Being Present!

It is easy to get caught up in tomorrow: what needs cleaned, shopping that needs to be done, the upcoming holidays. And while it's healthy to plan and prepare for future events, if you are too consumed with the tomorrows, there is a chance that you will miss something small and wonderful that is happening to you in the present moment.

Ray L. Huntington, a professor in the BYU Department of Ancient Scripture gives this short illustration: A few weeks ago I was waiting in the Chicago O'Hare Airport for a connecting flight to Salt Lake City with two of my colleagues: Blake Boatright and Vance Theodore. As we were seated near our gate, reading and relaxing before the last leg of our journey, I was interrupted by a rather enthusiastic black Labrador dog sniffing around my briefcase and other belongings I had on the floor. A police officer was standing nearby, and I immediately recognized the dog as a "sniffer" dog looking for drugs or the residue of explosive materials. While the dog moved rapidly from person to person, sniffing purses and carry-ons, it returned to my briefcase for a second check. After a few sniffs and what seemed like 100 wags of its tail, the dog and the police officer disappeared. A short time later, a second sniffer dog stopped by our gate to check things out as well.

Now, I could have dismissed the experience and continued to focus on my reading or think about needed preparations for the following week in school. Instead, my mind turned to the present moment, and I began to think about the two dogs and their training. They were there to make sure everything was in good order. They were there to ensure my safety and the safety of others who would be flying that day. After contemplating this, I quietly expressed thanks to Heavenly Father for trainers and dogs with wildly wagging tails who were there to bless my life. As mundane as that might sound to you, it was an enriching feeling—one that I have thought of frequently. Look for blessings in the now or the present moments of your life.

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9. Random Acts of Kindness: This can be something simple. I might suggest writing one positive email to praise or thank someone each day. Not only does it benefit the recipient, but it also increases your feeling of social support. Return the shopping cart to the stall, smile at people, pick up something some one has dropped, tell someone how nice they look, even perfect strangers, move over and let someone sit down by you.

10. Philanthropy – Learn to give no matter how much you have. Give a dollar or two. If you have more, give more. Do it outside of your tithing and contributions. The act of being able to give helps you feel well off and increases feelings of gratitude. Listen to the spirit and you will be guided when to share.