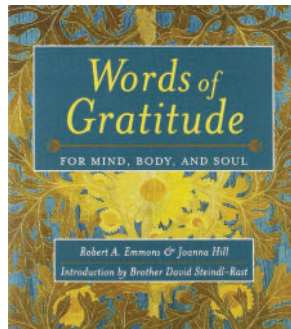




WORDS OF GRATITUDE
BY ROBERT A. EMMONS AND JOANNA V. HILL



THE BOOK

**Title: Words of Gratitude**

by Robert A. Emmons and Joanna V. Hill



INTRODUCTION

"The test of all happiness," said G.K. Chesterton, "is gratitude."

Learning to experience gratitude involves your everyday attitude, not your reaction when good things occur.

To be grateful, you don't need to wait until things are perfect or hope for good things to happen. In fact, practising gratitude makes you more receptive to life's blessings, and these blessings continue as you continue to be thankful.

The book *Words of Gratitude* helps the reader to identify their own abundance of gifts and blessings. In today's picture-perfect, social media-filled world, it is almost essential reading for teens who have a habit of looking at what they want rather than what they already have.

Written by a PhD and Professor of Psychology, this illuminating book can help trigger important conversations about the place gratitude has in a happy, meaningful life. While it often mentions prayer, it recognises a universal higher power and draws from the teachings of many religions to explain the incredible role gratitude has to play in our lives.



5 BEST QUOTES

"The process [of gratitude] begins with the awareness that we have a choice. The next step requires a necessary stillness within ourselves so we can do the internal work of being grateful."

"Gratitude emerges as an attitude we can freely choose in order to create a better life for ourselves and for others."

"By looking up by raising our eyes above our limited horizon, we are more likely to perceive the blessings hidden in affliction."

"Making the personal commitment to invest psychic energy in developing a personal worldview of your life as a "gift" or as your very self as being "gifted" holds considerable importance from the standpoint of positive psychology."

"There is a paradoxical aspect to gratitude as well: the more grateful we are, the more reasons we have to be grateful."



6 BIG IDEAS

1. WHAT IS GRATITUDE?

Gratitude is a sense of thankfulness and joy in response to receiving a gift, whether it is deserved or not, and whether it is a concrete or abstract gesture of kindness. Gratitude can also be a conscious, rational choice to focus on life's blessings rather than its shortcomings.

Gratitude has the power to either lift us higher than we normally stand, or to be our companion during our darkest moments. It causes us to be grateful for the good in the midst of tragedy as well as daily life.

The way each of us expresses and experiences gratitude begins with the awareness that we have a choice to be grateful. This helps us to shift from gratitude as a response to 'gratitude as an attitude'.

2. GRATITUDE THROUGH THE AGES

The concept of gratitude is present in almost every religion. From ancient to modern spiritual growth groups, along with forgiveness and love, gratitude is an important part of theological perspective.

The writings of many religions ask followers to stop regularly to give thanks. In religion, prayer is used at times of good or bad news, and God is praised for everything. This helps to maintain a divine perspective on life, and also sets the model of God's generosity providing a model for the way we should interact with each other.

Every religion recognises the value of demonstrating gratitude through actions and attitudes. Whether you are religious or not, it is interesting to observe the way gratitude has been highlighted as one of the solutions for a better, happier life for many centuries.

3. CULTIVATING GRATITUDE

Words of Gratitude explains that psychologists have developed methods to learn gratitude and make expressing it a habit.

One approach teaches the first step as identifying non-grateful thoughts before formulating gratitude-supporting ones.

If you can, take a moment to review your mindset throughout the day. Aim to substitute your negative responses with positive thoughts as a way to translate your inner feelings into outer action/behavioural changes.

As the book explains, making the personal commitment to invest energy in developing a personal worldview of your life as a gift, not a trial holds considerable importance from the standpoint of positive psychology.



6 BIG IDEAS

4. RESEARCH AND RESULTS OF GRATITUDE

Research into gratitude tested the idea that happier people count their blessings. The outcome showed people who were asked to put in writing five things they were grateful for on a regular basis felt better about their lives as a whole than those who wrote down five negative things each day. They felt more alive, energetic and optimistic about the upcoming week.

In another study, a group of people focused on gratitude reported helping someone with a personal problem, or offering emotional support to another, suggesting that positive social behaviour is a consequence of being grateful. These people reported feeling good and also doing good in their lives when they stopped to appreciate their many blessings.

What's interesting is that gratitude does not protect individuals from the experience of unpleasant emotions. Feeling grateful does not appear to be a state where suffering and adversity are selectively ignored. It may, however, help people develop the necessary psychological resources to successfully weather unpleasant emotional states.

5. HINDRANCES TO GRATITUDE

Words of Gratitude also explores why gratitude can be elusive for some people. The book suggests that people with narcissistic and self-important personality traits often struggle to feel grateful.

Having an exaggerated sense of deserving and entitlement results in selfish behaviour. Consider it this way: if one is entitled to everything, one is thankful for nothing.

If you are questioning why you struggle to feel grateful, it can help to check your own sense of entitlement and how you place yourself as a 'victim'. Knowing what the hindrances to gratitude are can identify your own roadblocks to feeling more joy and peace in your life.

6. BEING OPEN TO GRATITUDE

It takes a leap of faith or courage to see sufferings as blessings. Consider that Helen Keller, who was deaf and blind, considered her handicaps to be the greatest blessings in her life.

The final chapter of Words of Gratitude explains that people who express gratitude elicit more support from others. They cope better, have better health and are more accepted socially.

Being grateful doesn't mean you shouldn't acknowledge pain and difficult feelings. Instead, it helps encourage you to stay in a more honest space. If you need help, ask for it, then be grateful to receive it.

**3 ACTION STEPS****1. GIVE THANKS WITH EVERY ACT**

If you are struggling to feel grateful or to find joy in life, spend some time giving thanks for every move you make.

Washing the dishes? Be grateful for the water. Walking to school? Be happy you have legs. Consciously appreciating every moment will open you up to hundreds of opportunities to stop and feel grateful each day.

2. ACKNOWLEDGE HOW YOU CAUSE OTHERS TO STRUGGLE

This can be a powerful exercise. Words of Gratitude explains that if you are not willing to see and accept the events in which you have been the source of others' suffering, you cannot know yourself. Add to your gratitude practice a moment to reflect on how you have influenced others as a way of staying humble in your life.

3. BE MINDFUL AND KEEP A JOURNAL

Journaling gives you the opportunity to express your thoughts and list the things you are grateful for. Set aside time at the end of the day to sit quietly, calm your mind and let flow all the things you appreciate in your life. It could be five or ten reasons, or you can let the feelings, joy and thankfulness flow out through poetry or art.

Actively keeping a journal will make gratitude a habit and will change the way you perceive your world.

**1 KEY TAKEAWAY**

Grateful people are happier people. Take the time to mindfully count your blessings and they will start to show up in more places.



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Words of Gratitude

by Robert A. Emmons & Joanna Hill

Emmons is the world's leading gratitude researcher. This is his invitation to practise it: short reflections, prompts, and lines to return to when you want to see how much you already have.

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