

GRATITUDE

Calm Masterclass Toolkit





🌸 TAMARA LEVITT 🌸

Calm's mindfulness instructor, shares practical tools to help you create your own practice in our latest Calm Masterclass, [Gratitude](#).

The program includes stories and lessons learned from her own path toward gratitude (which was a bumpier journey than you might expect). It's part workshop, part Dharma talk, and part rousing wake up call, with engaging stories peppered throughout. We hope this

Calm Masterclass opens your heart as you awaken to the power of gratitude.

We created this toolkit for you to explore some additional gratitude exercises and practices offered by Tamara. As she recommends, try different ones, experiment to see what works, and forge a daily habit of expressing and feeling gratefulness. Enjoy!

“Gratitude isn’t something you climb to a mountaintop and wait for. It’s a practice we need to apply and repeat, deliberately and daily.”

– TAMARA LEVITT



GRATITUDE BOX



The Gratitude Box is a physical container where you store grateful memories. It could be a shoebox, a glass jar, or a treasure chest—if you have one handy. The idea is to write down something you are thankful for and place it in the box. You can do it every day or simply when you feel inspired. Each time you write something down and deposit it in your box, you are acknowledging a blessing,

and opening your heart to gratitude. Over time, as your box fills up with little folded pieces of paper, you’re building a repository of gratefulness. And when you are feeling sadness or lacking or struggles of whatever kind, your gratitude box becomes a helpful tool. All you have to do is open the box, reach inside, and presto: You’re reminded of something to be grateful for.



LETTER TO SELF



This exercise is a letter of thanks to your past self. If you think about it, you owe so much to your past self. Consider the thousands of decisions that were made by past versions of you, all leading to the life you have in this moment.

Think of the dangers averted, schooling completed, hardships endured, challenges overcome, lessons learned, healthy risks taken, goals set and achieved. Well, how about writing a letter to your past self,

and thanking - him or her or them - for all those fantastic actions and decisions, for which you are the fortunate beneficiary today. I recommend writing a letter by hand and being specific and detailed.

Like some of the other exercises, this is something you can return to. It might be cool to see how this changes over time. Perhaps you could write yourself a letter every year on your birthday, each time reading last year's before writing this year's.



" THANK YOU "



This exercise is one of the most ancient practices in all of human history: The simple act of saying "Thank you." It's among the first phrases we learn as children; "please" and "thank you" are often an early lesson in respect and politeness. But saying "thank you" can become an automatic reaction. We say "Thanks" many times a day, often without giving it any thought or having an emotional connection to the words.

Also, we let many opportunities to express thanks slip by, because we're rushed, or absent minded, or because we simply take others for granted.

So this exercise is a simple call-to-action to not let those opportunities sneak away. Be a force of appreciation. With family, friends, coworkers, and even strangers, seize every opportunity to say thank you, even for the tiniest of things. For helping with the dishes, holding that door, copy

editing that document, covering that shift, cleaning up that mess, or giving that advice, or encouragement, or hug. Do it in person when you can, but you can always email, text, or tweet.

This might sound easy but it's a tricky task. The challenge isn't just to say it, but to feel it, and to convey that appreciation.

***"If the only prayer you said was
thank you, that would be enough."***

– MEISTER ECKHART

*“It’s never the greener pastures
a few miles ahead. It’s the Earth
beneath our feet right now.”*

– TAMARA LEVITT

 **YES, AND** 

This exercise can help challenge the habit of complaining. Many of us don’t realize how often we complain. As an experiment, try to monitor your complaining tendencies for an entire day. Pay close attention to your words. You can even enlist a family member or friend to help point out when you do it. And each time you catch yourself, here’s a little trick to reframe that negative thought. It’s inspired by a principle I learned while taking improv acting classes in high school, and it’s called, Yes, and.

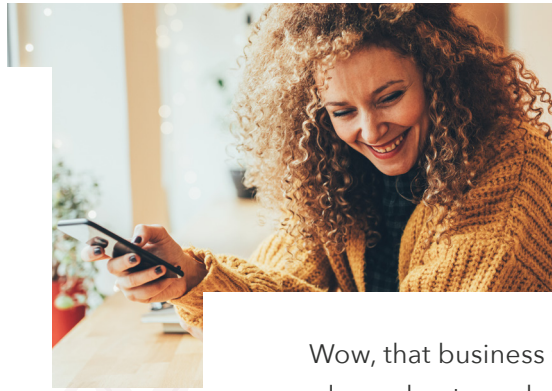
If you’re not familiar with improv, it’s a form of theater where scenes are completely, well, improvised. The way it works is that actors have to accept their fellow actors’ ideas and then build on them. So one performer might start a scene

by saying, “My goodness the moon looks lovely tonight.” Now, that performer’s scene partner can’t say “But it’s the afternoon, we can’t see the moon!” This destroys the scene. Instead, the scene partner has to find a way to ‘Yes, and.’ To agree with that idea and build on it. So he could say, “It certainly is a lovely afternoon to walk upon the moon,” while pretending to walk in slow-motion as if in low gravity.

Let’s see how this principle can be applied to complaining. Every time we catch ourselves in a complaint, we can ‘Yes, and’ in order to flip a negative observation into a positive one, allowing us to find the upside of a crummy circumstance, or see the broader good fortune in a minor grievance. Here are a few examples.

Great, my friend is 20-minutes late for our coffee meeting.

Yes, and now I have an unexpected opportunity to call a friend.



Wow, that business failure cleaned out my checking account.

Yes, and I learned valuable lessons that I can bring to my next venture.




I'm disappointed that my plans for the weekend were cancelled at the last minute.

Yes, and I'll take this opportunity to spend time with my nephew and give my sister a break.



Ugh, I have to spend my Saturday in bed, sick with the flu.

Yes, and at least I have an excuse to catch up on my favorite Netflix show.



*“Gratitude wakes us up to
the goodness and beauty in
life. But we have to choose it.”*

– TAMARA LEVITT



5 , 4 , 3 , 2 , 1

This is a simple exercise that can help you quickly tap into gratitude through your senses. It involves counting down from 5 and tuning in to the miraculous gifts we walk around with each day: the ability to see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. If you don't have the function of a certain sense, just adjust your countdown to the senses you would like to focus on. To do the exercise, simply pause and count down through your senses in the following way.



5

Observe 5 things you can see around you. It can be anything, furniture, the wall, a painting, or your cat. The idea is to acknowledge you appreciate that you can see.

Acknowledge 4 things you can touch in your environment, and reach out and feel their texture.

It might be the table in front of you, the clothes you're wearing, or a book in your lap. Really try to feel the fine details of each sensation.

4

3

Tune in to 3 things you can hear. This could be the sound of a nearby voice, a car driving by outside, or the hum of the refrigerator.

Recognize 2 things you can smell. This can sometimes be tricky, but even subtle smells count.

You can search for smells in the air, food cooking nearby, or even your shirt sleeve.

2

1

Notice 1 thing you can taste. What does the inside of your mouth taste like? Perhaps food or coffee from earlier? Or gum you've been chewing? Focus on the sense of taste for this last step.

Every moment of our lives, our senses are working their magic and reflecting back information about the world around us. Because sensory perception is so constant, it's easy to forget it's even happening. The goal of this exercise is to explore our senses, tune in to what we often ignore, and remind ourselves of the everyday gifts all around us in any moment.



GRATITUDE PROMPTS



One of the challenges of a healthy gratitude practice is to go beyond the obvious. People commonly put their family, health, and home on their list of things to be grateful for. But it's helpful to express and feel appreciation for things that are less obvious and very specific.

The following questions introduce 10 less obvious aspects of life. You can integrate these questions into your daily listing exercise, such as Gratitude Countdown or Journaling. If you're up for it, go through the list now, answering each question as specifically as possible. You can write down your answers, think them in your head, or say them out loud.

1 Who is a person from your past who made you a better person?

6 Who is a person from your past who made you a better person?

2 What's a piece of art in the world that brings you joy. Perhaps a painting, a novel, or poem?

7 When was the last time you spent money on something-anything?

3 What is a modern convenience that makes your life easier?

8 What's something you use every day that past generations didn't have?

4 What's a past challenge you endured that brought you strength or wisdom?

9 When was the last time you experienced the wonders of nature? Where was it and what did you see and do there?

5 What skill or talent do you possess that makes you feel proud?

10 When was the last time someone made you laugh?

*“Gratitude is like a love letter
to your life. And you’ve got to
write one each day.”*

– TAMARA LEVITT

If you ever notice your gratitude list slipping into repetition, these prompts can help elicit more varied and detailed sentiments. Here are some additional ideas to help provoke new ways to see and feel gratefulness.

Something you think is beautiful to see
A sound that is beautiful to hear
A voice or someone’s laughter that brings you happiness
An act of kindness that someone did for you
A ritual or routine during your day that brings you comfort
Someone who has supported you in your personal life
Someone who has supported you in your place of work or career
Someone who has taught you something
Someone who gave you a chance
Someone who has believed in you
Someone who makes you feel loved
Someone who has offered you a thoughtful or generous gift
Something that you learned
A challenge you overcame
Your favorite food
Your favorite drink
Your favorite smell
Your favorite musician or song
Something small you take for granted each day
A piece of clothing that you love
Your favorite place in the world



BREATH OF THANKS



We often miss out on the gifts in our lives because we're so distracted and stressed. Because we're rushing from one place to the next, one thing to the next, one idea to the next, we're unable to remain in the present where there are all kinds of amazing things we could be grateful for.

When we make a conscious effort to focus on present moment awareness, we wake up to this moment. So a great tool to pull you back to the present is of course the breath, because you can access it anywhere, anytime. And if you notice yourself getting caught up in thoughts of scarcity or negativity, you can use the breath to anchor you back in the present and to the gifts you're simply not seeing.

Dr. Frederic Luskin, the director of the Stanford University Forgiveness Projects came up with a short practice called, "Breath of Thanks," that is meant to help you get present in order to connect with gratitude.

There are three steps involved:

- 1** Two or three times every day when you aren't fully occupied, slow down and bring your attention to your breathing.
- 2** Notice how your breath flows in and out without your having to do anything, and continue breathing in this way.
- 3** For each of the next five to eight exhalations, say the words, "thank you" silently to remind yourself of the gift of your breath and how lucky you are to be alive. His suggestion is to practice this at least three times each week.
- 4** I'd like to add a fourth step, just because I know that once you're centered, it's easier to open to gratitude. So I like to think of three things I'm thankful for in that moment.

This is a really helpful practice when we get caught up in the stress and busyness of life. It helps remind you to stop and smell the roses, to notice what is right in front you. No matter what is going on in life, there are opportunities to give thanks. Whether it's the food we ate for lunch, or our body that was strong enough to get through a yoga class, we can't recognize these gifts unless we stop to notice them. Focusing on the breath helps us pull our attention back to the present.





GRATITUDE JOURNALING



For many people, one of the most impactful ways to develop a gratitude practice is through writing in a gratitude journal. The idea is to write down a list of the things we're grateful for: everything from the bigger things that are easier to notice, to the small day to day things we often overlook.

The act of writing down a list can be especially effective. Research has shown that translating our ideas into written language helps organize our thoughts and deepen their impact.

When we do this daily, we're habitually confirming all the goodness that exists in our lives, magnifying and expanding our experience of gratitude. And it's amazing how, as we begin listing things to be grateful for, there's a multiplying effect. We'll be grateful for one thing, and it reminds us of another, and it helps opens our eyes to all the small things we hadn't noticed.

Here are a few tips to get you started:

- If you can, try doing your journal entry at the same time each day. Being consistent helps establish a daily habit.
- Avoid falling into gratitude fatigue, which can happen when we list the same things each day in the same way. Mix it up and keep it fresh. Get as specific as possible. And look for new angles on recurring themes, finding different ways to expressing your acknowledgements.
- Let your writing flow naturally without too much thought. Don't worry about forming impeccable sentences. Let your mind wander fluidly as you write. The point is not to write an essay, but rather to channel gratefulness from heart, to pen, to page.
- Expect that this practice will take time to work it's magic. At first, it may be hard to think of things to be grateful for, and difficult to actually feel the words as you write. Simply start wherever you are, with whatever is right in front of you.



GRATITUDE COUNTDOWN



This simple exercise was invented by my good friend, Chris Advansun. You might know him as the author of some of Calm's Sleep Stories, including one called '[Gratitude.](#)'

Next time you notice yourself caught up in negativity or seem to be in need of a dose of gratitude, challenge yourself to a Gratitude Countdown and list ten things you're grateful for on the spot. This exercise can work really well as a recap of your day. You might want to try it right before bed, and as you search for things to be grateful for, just scan through your day and see what comes up.

To make your countdown most effective, I recommend being specific. So rather than just listing, "my dog and my home," give detail to each acknowledgement. Share not only what you're grateful for, but how and why. For example, you

might say, "I'm grateful that my dog snuggled up to me this evening and made me feel loved, and I'm grateful for the view out my bedroom window, of the sunset and treetops." By being specific, we're recalling a distinct memory or setting an actual scene in our mind's eye, which naturally evokes an authentic feeling of gratitude.

This exercise can be done in a twosome, where each person challenges the other to a countdown and guides them down the list from ten to one, almost like the lightning round in a game show. You might want to invite a friend, partner, or child to be your gratitude buddy. What you'll find is that sharing this experience strengthens not just your sense of gratitude but also the relationship. But it's also very powerful to do it on your own.



Here's an example of how this sounds.

10 The comforting bowl of miso soup I had for dinner.

5 The birds I heard chirping cheerfully outside my window early this morning.

9 The fact that I live so close to a beautiful park where I can breathe fresh air and enjoy a daily dose of nature.

4 The marvel of modern communication, and the ease with which it helps me stay in touch with my friends and family.

8 That a local tailor was able to fix the zipper on my 25-year-old, irreplaceable coat.

3 My incredible job, and the privilege of doing meaningful work and connecting with people all over the world.

7 The voice mail I received this morning from my nephew, and the love I feel when I hear his sweet little voice.

2 My network of friends, and the support and love I feel from my friendships.

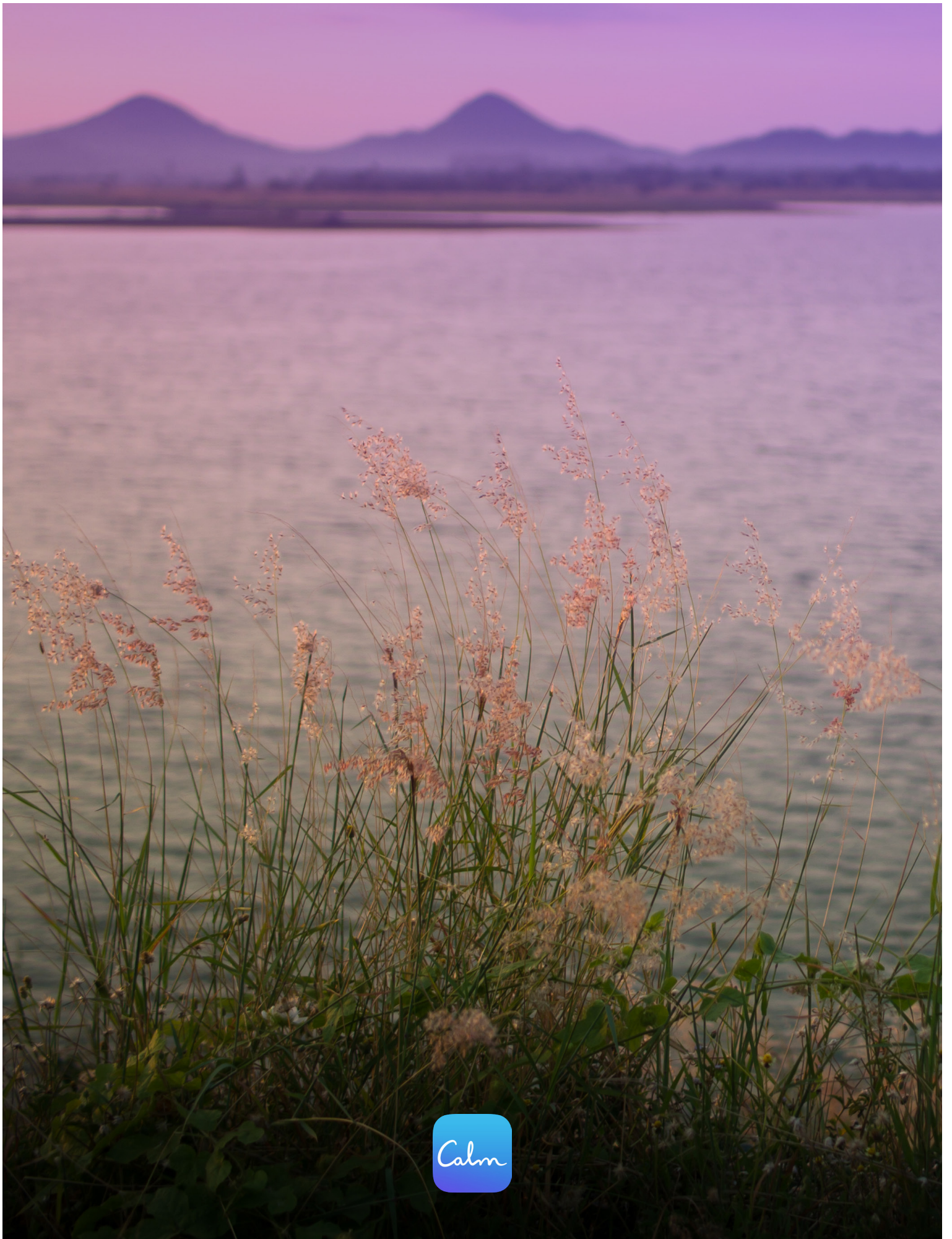
6 The subway system I use to zip across the city to do errands.

1 My meditation practice, and my path, which have kept me grounded in times of challenge.



When we feel grateful, there's this transformational shift. Everyday things become miracles, like our beating heart, running water, the warmth of the sun.

– TAMARA LEVITT



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