

Gratitude needs to be genuine to be effective – but the results can be uplifting, not being true to yourself? We walk you through how to uncover and embrace your genuine self.

When was the last time you were grateful? Not the absentminded “thanks” you may have uttered when someone held the door for you that merely fulfils a common, often empty cultural norm.

I am talking about genuine, deep appreciation. The kind you feel in your heart, that creates better relationships, protects you from envy, greed and resentment, and improves your self-esteem. That boosts your immune system and contributes to better physical and psychological health.

Normally, I would write about all the amazing benefits of gratitude in detail, but today I'd like to be more practical. Talking about gratitude is one thing. Feeling it is much more useful. So here is my invitation: create a daily gratitude practice. Spend a few minutes in the morning looking forward to the day and feel thankful for what hasn't happened yet. Ideally, do this just after you wake up and before you start worrying about what is ahead and what could go wrong. Establish a mindset that focusses you on best possible outcomes.

Look back on the day before you go to sleep and, rather than focus on what went wrong or what you didn't achieve, appreciate what worked. Acknowledge the people who contributed to your day, and become aware of how you overcame challenges and what you learned from them. Notice when you prioritised self-care, when you were kind to yourself, or when you set boundaries and said no.

While the list of things you can be grateful for is endless, the focus is not on quantity but quality – on feeling gratitude. Don't just thank someone for helping you; actually mean it. Be present to the sensations in your body, especially your heart. Express your appreciation with words and share a smile that lights up your eyes. Then notice how gratitude flows both ways and uplifts you both.

Start a gratitude journal and write down at least three things each day you are thankful for. Use it when you want to shift yourself into a more positive state of mind, when you need a boost towards what is possible.

To find out how gratitude benefits you personally, ask yourself the following question: How do I feel about myself when I am by myself? No matter what the answer, focus on gratitude for a few days and notice what happens. You may be surprised.