



The Survivor's Compass

Tools for "Self" Supported Trauma Healing

Gratitude Exercises

If you listen to your inner dialogue, you may discover that it is primarily negative. Thoughts that are the by-product of unresolved subconscious beliefs become well-worn paths in the brain. This negative outlook on life leads to apathy, depression and despair. Getting out of the perpetual loop of negative thoughts requires training the brain to look for the positive.

By daily practicing positive thoughts, a new pathway becomes established in the brain, making way for positive life change. Practicing daily gratitude exercises will help you train your brain to look for what is positive in your life. The simplicity of this approach may tempt you to dismiss the effectiveness of this method. Do not underestimate the power of these simple exercises to lift your mood and help you get in touch with Self.

How to practice daily gratitude exercises:

1. Get a small journal and a yearly calendar, one that has large enough boxes to write in.
2. Choose a time of day to do the exercise, preferably in the morning or evening. Attaching the exercise to a daily habit that you have already established will help (i.e. with your morning coffee, after dinner in the evening, etc.)
3. Place your writing materials in a location where they are easily accessible and visible, to remind you of your commitment.
4. At the designated time, sit down and write three things for which you are grateful on your gratitude calendar. These do not have to be big things, however, they must be something new each day. *Example: I am grateful for the sun shining in my window this morning. I am grateful for my car that gets me to work each day. I am grateful for the smile on my child's face.*

Note: If you miss a day, go back to that box on your calendar and fill it in before going to the next day. This is how you track your daily progress with the exercise and stay consistent.

5. Write a short journal entry about something that happened to you within the past 24 hours that was a positive experience. This does not have to be a long entry. Simply choose one thing to focus on that was positive and rewarding. **Example:** *I enjoyed a hike this weekend with my kids. We got outside and really connected with each other. The sun was shining, and the air was crisp and clear. I loved being in the mountains with my favorite people!*