

# *The Manual of You™*

## ***Happiness Tracker:*** *Cultivating Appreciation and Joy*

**1)** Research shows that pausing to reflect on what you're appreciative of can increase your emotional well-being and cultivate more life satisfaction. Sometimes it can be challenging to think of anything to be thankful for or appreciative of when life is hard and we're feeling low – that's when it's especially important. Maybe you're appreciative of having your health, or for an especially tasty cup of tea, or the roof over your head, or that you have a friend you can text, or that your bed is super comfy, or if not, that you can afford to buy a new duvet and sheets to make it so\*.

Appreciating what you have based on someone else having less isn't always a useful strategy as it can make us feel guilty, but, nevertheless, realising how fortunate we are and that some people don't have as much as us and pausing to just appreciate that we have these luxuries, can be powerful.

Try it, keep at it and the more details you can add to anchor this gratitude to, the better (that's why I've added the 'because' underneath every statement of appreciation). Becoming more appreciative and learning to feel more positive is a skill and as such, it needs to be practised, just like learning to play the piano or coding. The more effort you put in, the greater the outcome. And if you stop practising, your skills will become rusty again. What you focus on will become your reality, so choose what you want to focus on, day to day, week after week.

An old myth says it takes 21 or 28 days to establish a new habit. I wish it was that simple. It can take between 18-200+ days depending on your effort and personality and circumstances. The question for you is – will it be worth the effort? Do you care enough to change? Do you want to change?

Day:

Date:

Time:

**1) Today, I'm thankful for:**

1)

Because...

2)

Because...

3)

Because...

**2)** Becoming aware of challenges in life – or triggers – can help us grow our self-awareness. The more aware we grow, the better we’ll become at identifying, dealing with and managing these challenges and triggers in the future. We can learn to become less reactive and more active in choosing how we want to engage. But remember, just like before, it’s a skill that needs attention and dedication and it can come and go depending on the work you put in. But also, we’re all just doing the best that we can with what resources, support, energy and knowledge we have – so, give yourself a break. The aim should always be progress over perfection.

**Today’s challenge was (or, I was triggered by):**

1) Nothing...

*YAY! Another thing to be grateful for!*

2) Ok, there was this challenge/trigger...

It was challenging/triggering because...

How I dealt with it...

How I’d like to have dealt with it...

Considering the circumstances of today and the knowledge at hand at the time, how did I (re)act in the best way possible, for me, for who I am right now? If I was talking to my best friend and wanting to be supportive, what would I say about how they handled this challenge/trigger?

What did I learn about myself from this situation?

How might that be useful going forward?

3) Get better at complimenting yourself. Anyone who lacks self-esteem or confidence tends to wish to have more, and yet, so few are willing to be nice to themselves to gain it. Well, money doesn't grow on trees and nor does feeling good about yourself. You have to put in the work and commit. Start slowly and realistically. If you try and state things you don't actually agree with (like, 'I'm amazing' when you don't feel amazing), your brain is likely going to dislike you more (that's why some of us feel so yucky about certain overly positive affirmations). But we all have some redeeming features. Trust me.

Whatever your relationship or thoughts are about affirmations (positive declarations), give it a go. If you already know what they are and love them – knock yourself out. If you are a sceptic, like I used to be, and it sounds too airy-fairy or woo-woo, think of them as simply wishes for yourself that you're reminding yourself of. Or true statements about yourself that you want to emphasise, like “I deserve to be loved as much as anyone else” or “I want to be a confident person” or “I want to create more connections in life and be happier”.

I used to say to myself: “I will lead and not follow” and it was a reminder to think for myself and to follow my intuition over that of others who I deemed more worthy than me. Saying this to myself, helped me remind myself of who I wanted to be and, thereby, was a starting point to change by taking action – because an affirmation without action is like learning to play the piano by merely looking at the keys.

**Today's compliment(s) to myself is/are (the more, the merrier) (Details, please!):**

My chosen affirmation as I go to sleep:

What action will I take to make it a reality:

My chosen affirmation for when I wake up tomorrow:

What actions will I take to make it a reality:

Tomorrow, I'm looking forward to (more is always more):

4) The mood tracker is a handy tool for when feeling low – or indeed, when feeling happy too, or just ‘meh’ – and, again, it’ll help you increase your self-awareness about various triggers – also happy triggers. Do you get angrier during certain parts of the month? If so, give yourself a break during that period every month. Do you feel less energised when it’s dark and rainy – ok, then permit yourself to do less on dark and rainy days without beating yourself up. Do you feel extra happy and motivated when you’ve been around certain people – great! Make sure you have more interactions like that in your life. Add comments on how you can help yourself when things are tricky, like poor sleep, lack of movement or you’re feeling increasingly stressed.

### **Check-in & Mood Tracker**

– noticing yourself in terms of your environment, using a scale of 1-10 (1 being really bad or low, and 10 being really high or fantastic) rate each prompt below. Add comments when needed.

The weather today was:

My physical health today was:

My monthly hormonal cycle is at... (when applicable):

Last night I’d rate the quality of my sleep as:

My diet today/lately has been:

Exercise/Movement:

Other people's moods or attitudes towards me:

Work stress:

Personal stress:

Interpersonal (between you and another/others) relationship issues are currently at a...:

Inner critic volume today was:

Good news and kind gestures received today:

Things that worked out well today:

Other stuff that might have impacted my mood and overall satisfaction today (traffic jams, supermarket problems, family drama, something lost or broken...?) (Comment and rate):



My mental health today (1-10):

My overall mood today (1-10):

**Conclusion:** Looking at all the scores, except the last two, can my overall mood and mental health rating today be attributed to something external?

If yes, what can you do to future-proof your life satisfaction to let external factors influence you less going forward?

\*Disclaimer: Sometimes life's incredibly unfair and hard. If you've suffered a devastating loss or your current living situation is fraught and frightening or you're dealing with chronic pain or any other such heartbreaking and difficult thing, you have every right to call this 'Happiness Tracker' a toxic piece of sh\*t.

This isn't meant for you. At least not for where you're at right now. Some organisations offer happiness training for people in those situations and, indeed, the discipline of Positive Psychology would argue that gratitude and mindfulness-based practices are still incredibly helpful. And it's not that they're wrong but it's about taste – reading the room – and maybe right now, isn't the time for you to sit and 'count your blessings'. It's not just OK to feel absolutely awful, it's part of life, and it's toxic as f\*ck to try and find a silver lining or something to be grateful for or to look on the bright side when you're in that head space. However, don't move in. Eventually, I hope you'll feel ready to invite joy back in and hold its hand.