



happiness in PRACTICE

Information and Resources

Simple Science that works



Happiness is not an accident nor a gift. It is a state of positive mental and physical well-being you can learn to achieve, sustain and improve. Millions of people around the world have stopped dreaming it and started being it. A bit like getting physically fit, you can sit and watch all the lectures, read all the books, wish all the

wishes but nothing changes until you get up and start moving. Putting the theory into action. By learning how to change some attitudes, gain simple skills and use them in your daily life, you can make those changes happen. Regular practice (yes, some effort is required) will help you enjoy life more and get more out of it.

The Positive Psychology movement has identified key methods and techniques that have inspired people to see that greater happiness is an achievable goal. No fancy jargon, no academic nonsense, no expensive therapy; just a few great ideas that anyone can learn and benefit from.



The basics are simple to apply. It's about appreciating the good things, acting kindly to others, dealing with setbacks, knowing your own personal strengths and expressing gratitude to those who help and support you. It does take some motivation, determination and effort. *Is that you?*

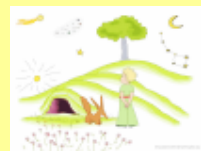
Have you ever wanted to enjoy your life more?

Do you want to have a better and happier outlook on life?

Positive Psychology has the tools and skills to achieve this!

**No cost
No drugs
No therapy
No nonsense**

Just Put Happiness Into Practice





A simple 5 week programme

**There is no magic key, no magic pill,
but there is a recipe, and ingredients!**

Why not try this simple, 5 week programme. Each week you will focus on one particular attitude or skill. **PAUSE** and make time for **happiness in practice**.

- **Week 1 P**ractice Appreciation
- **Week 2 A**cts of Kindness
- **Week 3 U**se Your Personal Strengths
- **Week 4 S**etbacks and Resilience
- **Week 5 E**xpressions of Gratitude

Of course, you shouldn't just stop after 5 weeks. These are lifetime skills that you will use again and again. When you've done each exercise for the first week, keep it going.

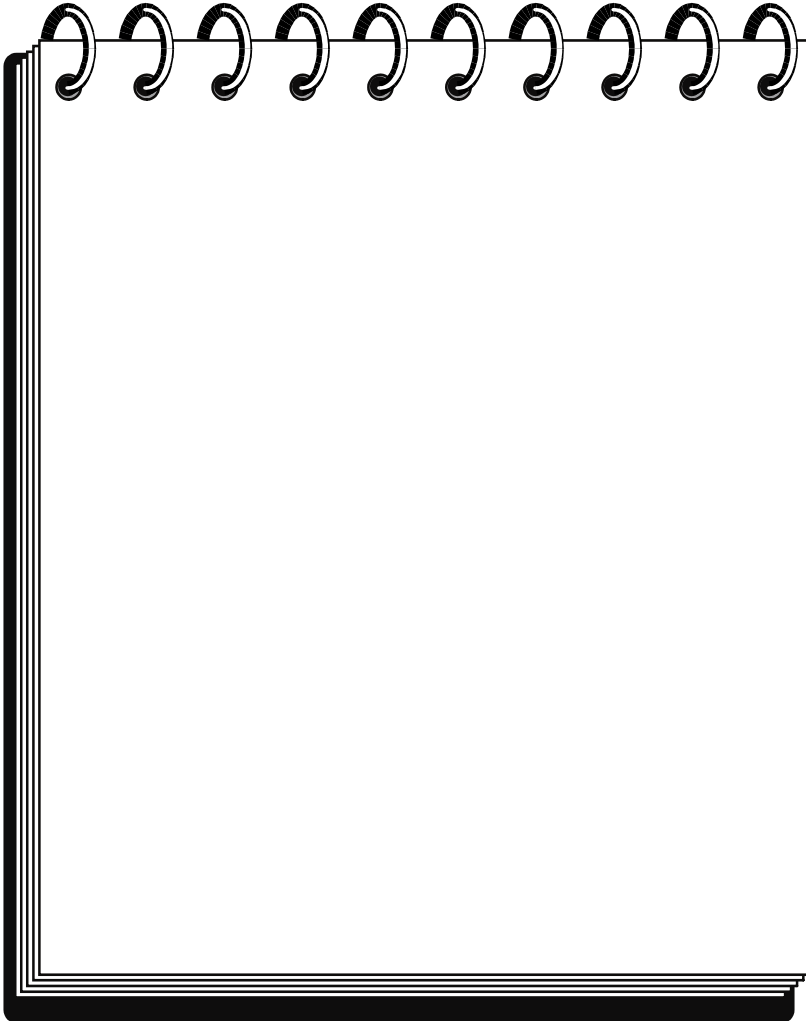
Life doesn't always run smoothly. You will find that these skills will help you win through when times are not so good. Remember and practice them.

They will also make the positive experiences even stronger when things are going well.

Week 1 Practice Appreciation

We take so many things for granted that sometimes we hardly notice the things we enjoy and appreciate. On the other hand we certainly notice the things that annoy or upset us. Let's get the balance right! For the next week try to pay more attention to the little and large things that you enjoy in the day. Aim for at least 3 things you **Appreciate** per day. Note them down here and review them each evening.

Notes:



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Week 2 Acts of Kindness

It may seem strange, but much of our own happiness and sense of well-being comes from helping improve the happiness and well-being of others. Each day, in large or small ways, we can practice acts of kindness and thoughtfulness that make the world just a little better place to live. That's our world too! Try for 3 **Acts of Kindness** a day and note down your achievements. Read them over each evening.

Here are some ideas for acts of kindness

1. Give up your seat
2. Hold a door open for someone
3. Give a (sincere) compliment
4. Make someone laugh
5. Give someone a hug
6. Take time to really listen to someone
7. Make someone new feel welcome
8. Let one car in on every journey
9. Give directions to someone who's lost
10. Have a conversation with a stranger
11. Pick up litter as you walk
12. Let someone in front of you in the supermarket queue
13. Tell someone they mean a lot to you
14. Let someone have your parking spot
15. Read a story with a child
16. Offer your change to someone struggling to find the right amount
17. Treat a loved one to breakfast in bed
18. Buy cakes or fruit for your colleagues
19. Invite your neighbour round for a drink and a chat
20. Offer to help with someone's shopping
21. Tell someone if you notice they're doing a good job
22. Pass on a book you've enjoyed
23. Say sorry (you know who to)
24. Forgive someone for what they've done
25. Visit a sick friend, relative or neighbour
26. Buy an unexpected gift for someone
27. Bake something for a neighbour
28. Pay for someone in the queue behind
29. Do a chore that you don't normally do
30. Help out someone in need
31. Offer to look after a friend's children
32. Offer to mow your neighbour's lawn
33. Donate your old things to charity
34. Give food to a homeless person and take time to talk with them
35. Visit someone who may be lonely

- 36. Give blood
- 37. Get back in contact with someone you've lost touch with
- 38. Organise a fundraising event
- 39. Volunteer your time for a charity
- 40. Plan a street party

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Week 3 Use Your Personal Strengths

Although at times we may feel weak and helpless, we all have strengths. Often these go unrecognised and we may even believe some of the strengths are weaknesses. Let's get a more balanced view by looking at some important strengths you may display in your day to day life. Read the list on the following pages and note down your **Personal Strengths** below.

Notes:



Signature Strengths

Key qualities you may have or wish to work towards. Some will be more typical of you than others. Know your strengths and build on them.

	Strength	Description
1	Creativity [originality, ingenuity]	Thinking of novel and productive ways to do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it
2	Curiosity [interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience]	Taking an interest in all of ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering
3	Open-mindedness [judgment, critical thinking]	Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly
4	Love of Learning	Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the tendency to add systematically to what one knows
5	Perspective [wisdom]	Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people
6	Bravery [valour]	Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it
7	Persistence [perseverance, industriousness]	Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks
8	Integrity [authenticity, honesty]	Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way; being without pretence; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions
9	Vitality [zest, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]	Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or half-heartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated
10	Love	Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people
11	Kindness [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, "niceness"]	Doing favours and good deeds FOR others; helping them; taking care of them Kindness and generosity

12	Social Intelligence [emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]	Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit in to different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick Social intelligence
13	Citizenship [social responsibility, loyalty, teamwork]	Working well as member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share
14	Fairness	Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance
15	Leadership	Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the same time maintain good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen
16	Forgiveness and mercy	Forgiving those who have done wrong; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful
17	Humility/Modesty	Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not seeking the spotlight; not regarding one's self as more special than one is
18	Prudence	Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted
19	Self-regulation [self- control]	Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions
20	Appreciation of beauty and excellence [awe, wonder, elevation]	Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in all domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience
21	Gratitude	Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks
22	Hope [optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]	Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about
23	Humor [playfulness]	Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes
24	Spirituality [religiousness, faith, purpose]	Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort

If you'd like to check your signature strengths, please go online to

www.authentichappiness.org

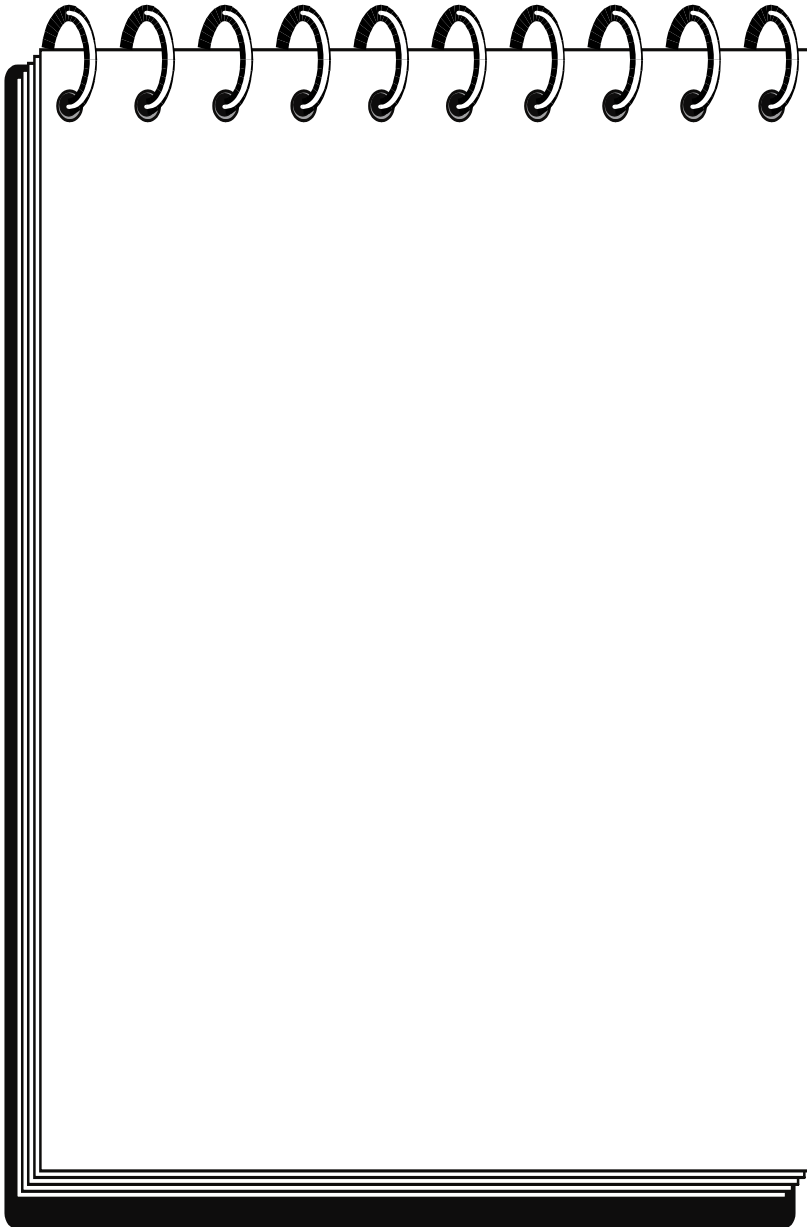
Register on the site (free) and complete the VIA signature strengths test.

This week, keep a note each day of any Personal Strengths you have used. If you identify some that are not on the list, that's great! Include them too! Try to record 3 **Personal Strengths** a day and review them each evening.

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Week 4 Setbacks and Resilience

Life doesn't always go smoothly. There are times when we all have to face difficulties, distress and pain, both physical and emotional. That's normal. But as a famous man once said, if you are going through hell then it's best to keep going. There will be another side where you can come out and move on. Another famous philosopher said that setbacks can strengthen us. If we learn from our experiences, we come out better able to deal with future problems. Sometimes we have to fall to rise again. That's resilience.

Resilience is often said to be the key to managing Happiness

What is Resilience and how do you develop it?

- Ability to “bounce back” after an insult.
- Cope adequately in the face of difficulties.
- Bend but not break under stress.
- Handle setbacks when things go awry.
- Maintain equilibrium when events are highly aversive.
- Ability to persevere.
- Envision a positive outcome in the future.
- See the bigger picture.
- Ability to look on the bright side
- Create meaning; transcend
- Flexibility
- Get support; accept help
- Recapture past success
- Model others who have been resilient.
- Share the successful experience with others
- Physical self-care
- Sense of humor
- Embrace change
- Access creativity

Characteristics of Resilience

Characteristic

Signs

Emotional Self Control

The ability to control the intensity of our feelings in order to stay focussed during stressful events. People with this trait also display a greater ability to be consistent in their behaviour across a wide range of situations.

Strong Relationships

Resilient individuals maintain **strong connections with others** and tend to have supportive relationships. They are not too proud to accept help and advice from those they trust.

Genuineness and Self-Acceptance

Genuineness involves ensuring that our behaviour reflects our aims and values. Practising what we preach. Self-acceptance implies that those aims, values and expectations are realistic and based on an accurate recognition of our strengths as well as our vulnerabilities.

Goal Setting

Goal-setting involves developing realistic aims and planning consistent, specific and dedicated action to achieve them. There is little point in focusing on goals that seem unattainable. Making a start with small steps leading to success is better than leaping to failure.

Self-Efficacy

Self efficacy is the belief in our ability to get things done and to move steadily towards our goals. Fear of failure is often self-fulfilling. Avoiding distraction, staying focussed on success and playing to our strengths usually pays off.

Perspective

Some people have a tendency to ‘catastrophise’. Any setback is a disaster and life is all ‘doom and gloom’. While some setbacks may be major, many are more minor. Being able to keep things in proportion and see the way forward, the positive as well as the negative, is important.

Curiosity

The desire to learn about new things and have new experiences. Being open-minded trying out different approaches rather than becoming stuck in a rut. New ideas and skills increase the ability to move on through an adversity.

Persistence and flexibility

Persistence is often the trait most associated with resilience. The ability to tolerate discomfort and frustration and persevere through difficulties or challenges. Often summed up as ‘If at first you don’t succeed, try again.’ Be flexible rather than ‘banging your head against a brick wall’.

Humour

A sense of humour helps us not to take ourselves or our ideas too seriously. We are better able to step back a pace and see the situation with a bit more detachment and objectivity.

If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging!

Inevitably life does not always work out as we would wish or expect. Bad things do happen but the way we think about them can often make them worse. Think about examples of events from your own experience that might fit any or all of the following categories.

Here's an example for jumping to conclusions: My mother called yesterday and asked how I was. I immediately assumed she was going to complain that I hadn't visited for a while. I felt tense and pressured about having to try and fit in a visit in a busy schedule.

Digging it deeper

Signs

Jumping to conclusions

Responding impulsively to situations before you have full information. Loss of control over emotions.

Tunnel vision

Not seeing the wood for the trees. So fixed in an attitude or approach that important information and alternatives are ignored.

Magnifying and minimizing

Allowing negatives to seem so important that they seem to dominate everything while failing to give any credit to the positives.

Personalizing

'Everything wrong must be my fault.' 'Things always go wrong because I'm useless.' 'I never seem to learn or change.' 'People will all blame me.' Resilience requires accurate, realistic self-assessment.

Externalizing

Opposite of personalizing. 'I'm just a victim here.' 'People always let me down.' 'Life is just so unfair.' Resilience requires accepting a personal responsibility for changes where you can make them.

Over generalizing

'Nothing will ever go right for me.' 'Everything I try fails.' 'I'm a total mess as a parent/partner/colleague.' 'It's not worth even trying.' 'I'm unhappy now so happiness can never come or last'.

Read My Mind

'I know I didn't tell them how I felt but they should just have known.' 'I shouldn't have to ask for help.' 'They should see that's not what I wanted.' 'People are just insensitive to my feelings.'

Emotional Reasoning

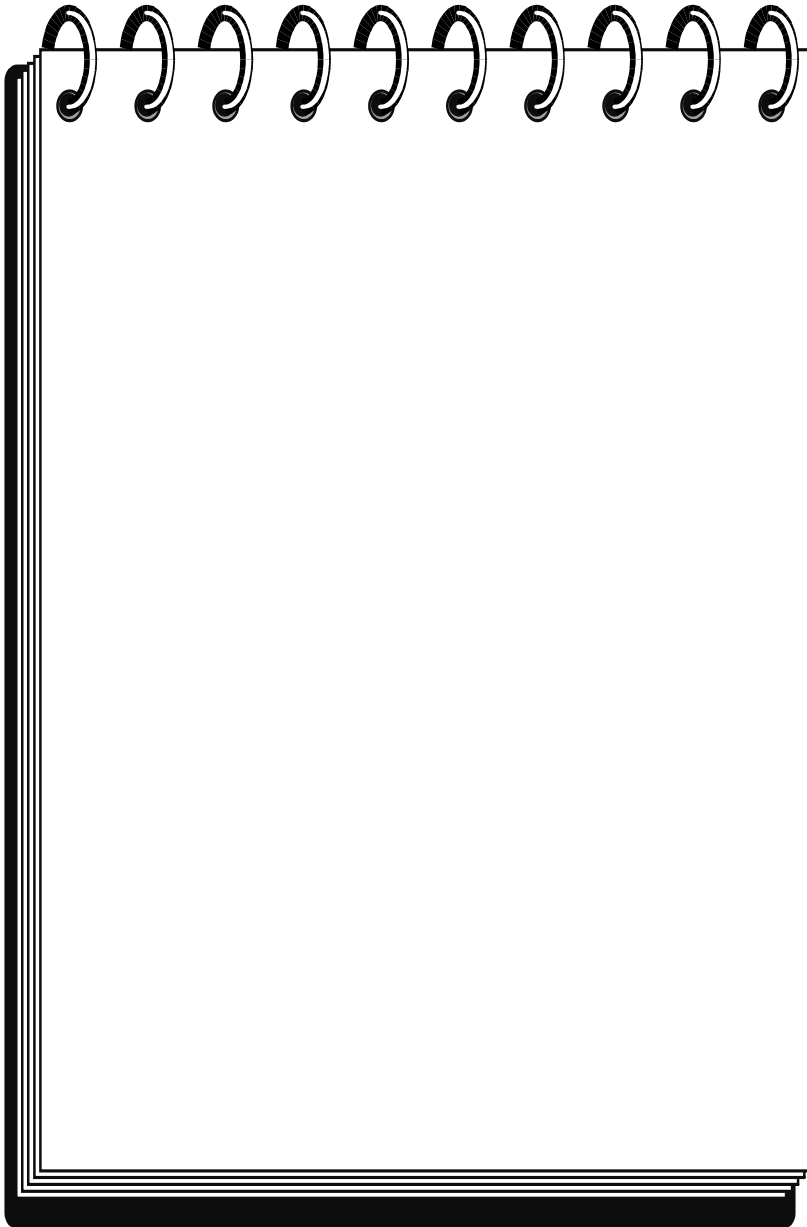
'I'm feeling anxious so I'm not going to cope.' 'I'm not feeling at my best today so everything will go wrong.' 'I'm feeling good so everything will be OK even if I make no effort or plans.'

This week, keep a note each day of any examples of Resilience you have used. If you identify some that are not on the list, that's great! Include them too! Try to record 3 examples of **Resilience** a day and review them each evening.

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Week 5 Expressions of Gratitude

One of the core ingredients of Positive Psychology is the *Gratitude Letter*: a written and specific expression of thanks to someone who has been especially kind or important to you and who has never heard you express your gratitude. It might be parents, siblings, other relatives, friends, teachers, coaches, teammates, employers, and so on.

Guidelines for a gratitude letter and a gratitude visit

You can write the letter any way you like. It is recommended that you actually read it aloud face to face to the person if possible, or you can visit them face to face and then hand them the letter to read themselves whilst you stand there. If personal delivery in a gratitude visit is not possible then you can mail, fax, or email the letter. You might then follow up by making a phone call.

If for some reason those options are not possible then you might like to read it aloud as if they were listening. You might like to do this at a special place or location, one that has strong memories for you.

Some people find it helpful to keep the letter for a period of time (say one week) and read it everyday for that time.

You may find it helpful to write about the following things:

1. Why you are writing this letter.
2. What you are grateful for. Be as specific as possible.
3. Describe the things you are grateful for in concrete terms
4. Describe how their behaviour affected you, how you benefited, what you learnt.
5. Allow yourself to really be in touch with the feeling of gratitude as you write.
6. Read and re-read the letter to ensure that it really captures your thoughts and feelings.
7. Set a time and day to go on your gratitude visit.
8. Make the visit. For many people this is the hardest part, but it is also the most beneficial.

THE LETTER OF GRATITUDE EXERCISE: HOW GRATITUDE CAN HELP OUR LIVES.



Gratitude is about being aware of and appreciating the good things in your life and not taking them for granted. It is about acknowledging the kindness of others. It helps us recognise that we are not alone and that others have helped and supported us along the way.

Gratitude is an important character strength that is strongly correlated with happiness. It is a very positive emotion; after all it is hard for a person to feel bitter, angry and resentful at the same time as feeling grateful. So to be able to experience this emotion more of the time can only be a good thing.

As well as increasing our happiness, being grateful ensures we look after ourselves, our relationships and our lives.

Gratitude is sometimes regarded as a spiritual act.

However, many researchers have been investigating the scientific aspects of gratitude and how engaging in gratitude activities can enhance happiness. What is emerging is that gratitude is not just for the spiritual, it is an intervention that can be beneficial to us all.

Research by a psychologist, Martin Seligman, found people who wrote a gratitude letter to someone they had never properly thanked were happier and less depressed one month later compared to those who had simply written about an early memory.

Another psychologist, Sonja Lyubomirsky, was even able to show that people writing gratitude letters for just 15 minutes a week for 8 weeks were happier 6 months later.

Other research has shown gratitude is associated with better life satisfaction, increased social support and may help prevent stress and depression. Increased awareness of the good things and people in your life makes positive feelings stronger, so you come to see the world differently.

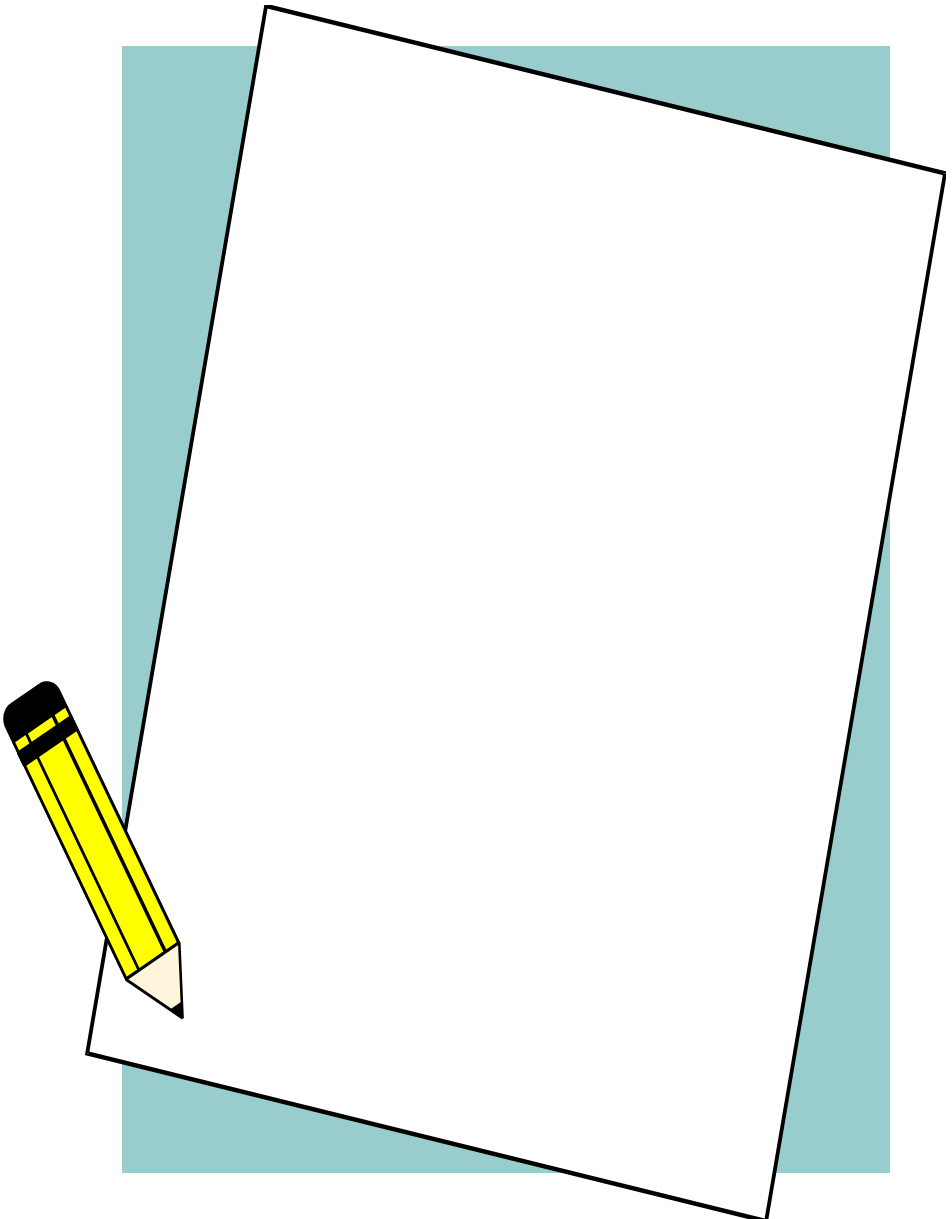
Nothing has changed, just your attitude and your perspective on life.

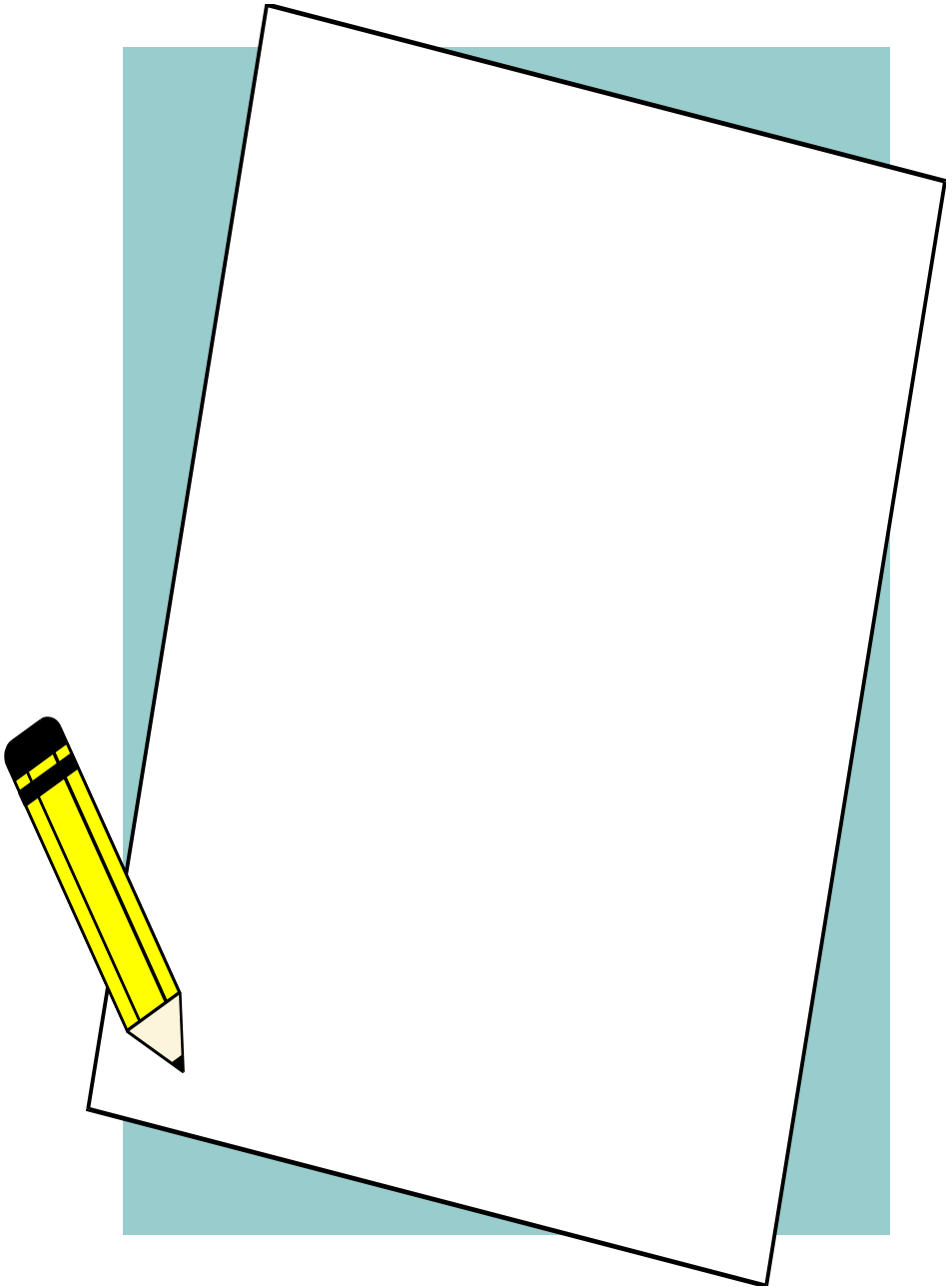
If you have benefitted from these exercises, you can help others change their lives too. The lessons have been simple – pass them on. One way to improve all our happiness and well-being is to help others as we ourselves have been helped.

We call this ‘Pay it Forward’.

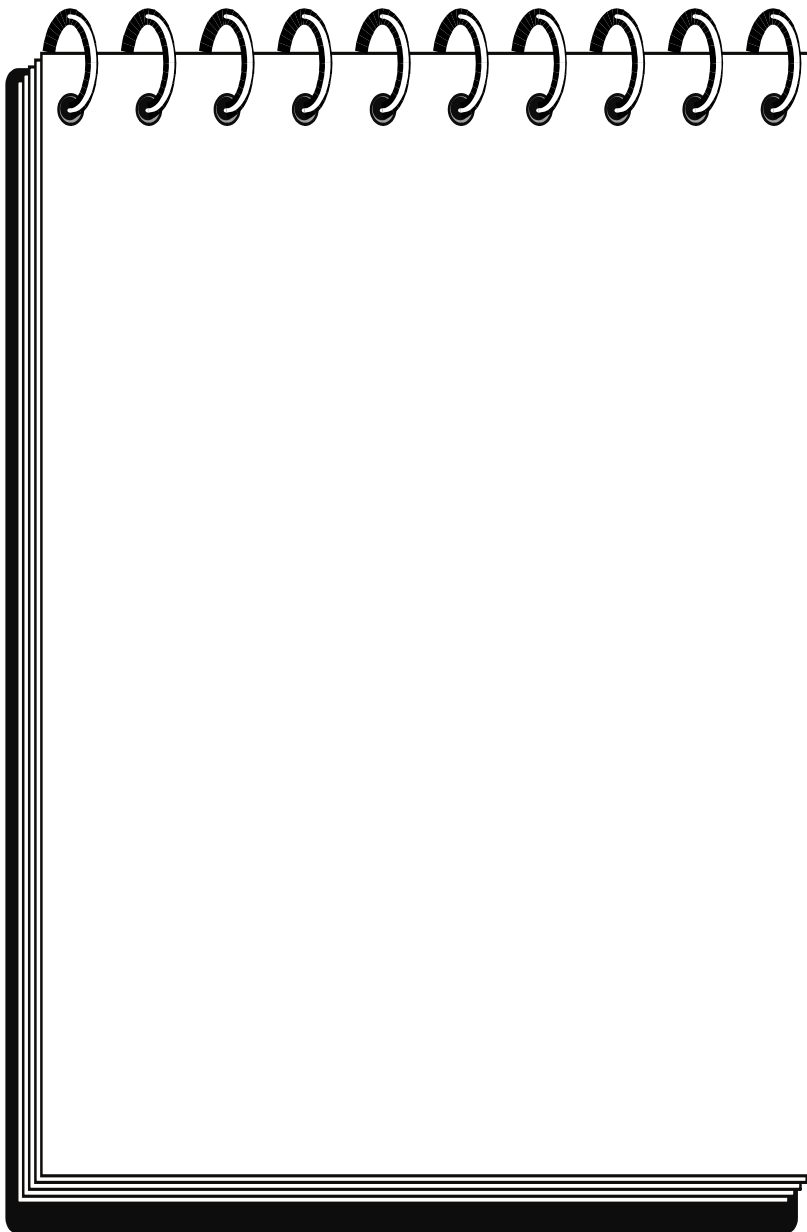
Gratitude may pay back those who have helped you, but **Pay it Forward** and your positive input may end up helping countless others – and yourself!

Write an outline of your **Gratitude Letter** here:

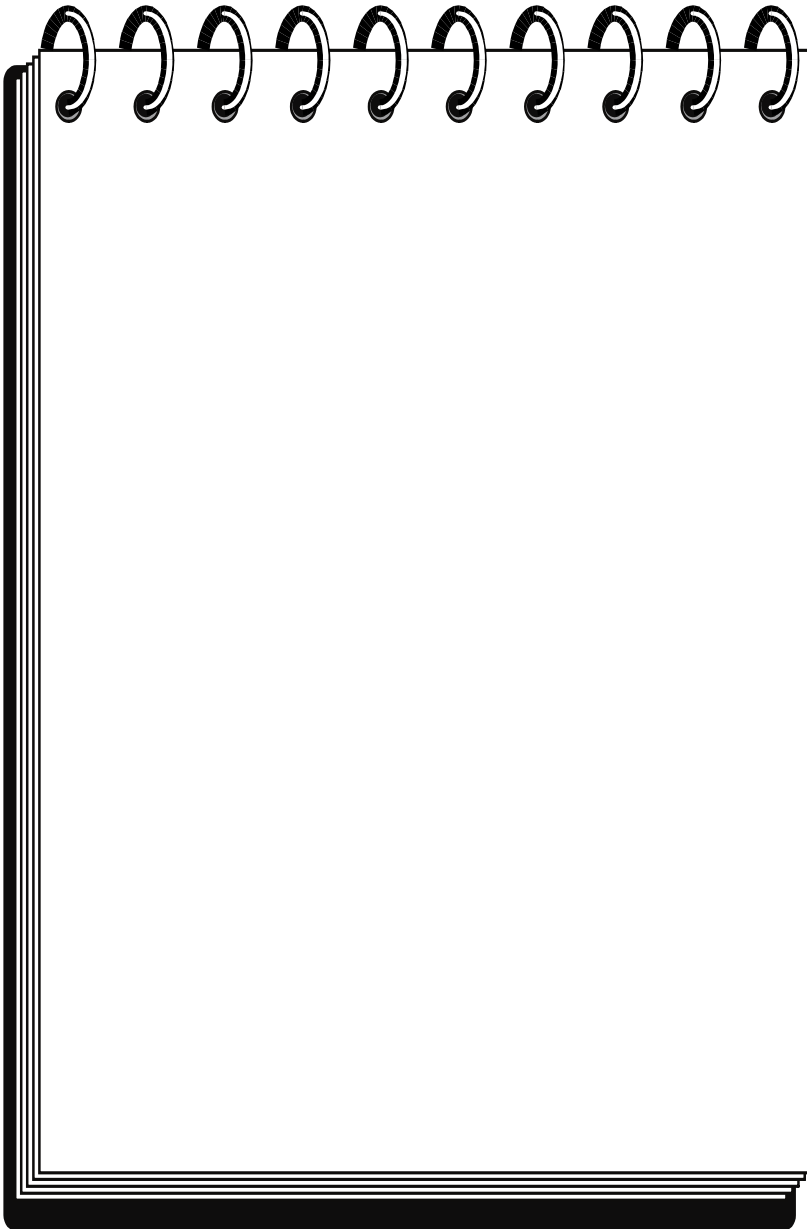




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Some Resources



Books

Awareness, Anthony De Mello

Man's search for meaning, Victor Frankl

Stumbling on Happiness, Daniel Gilbert

Feel the fear and do it anyway, Susan Jeffers

Happiness: Lessons from a New Science, Richard Layard

The Pursuit of Happiness: Who is Happy, and Why? David G. Myers

Learned Optimism, Martin Seligman

Authentic Happiness, Martin Seligman

Gateway to Happiness, Zelig Pliskin



Web Resources

Action for Happiness <http://www.actionforhappiness.org/>

Authentic Happiness <http://www.authentichappiness.com>

Authentic Happiness Test Centre
<http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/testcenter.aspx>

Centre for Confidence and Well-being
<http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk/pp/>

Five Areas Resources Area
<http://www.fiveareas.com/resourcearea>

Kindness Scotland
<http://www.kindnesscotland.co.uk/links.html>

Living Life to the Full <http://www.lltf.com>

Positive Psychology UK
<http://www.positivepsychology.org.uk/>

Mood Gym <http://moodgym.anu.edu.au>

5 Lectures at www.ted.com

Dan Gilbert asks, Why are we happy?

Matthieu Ricard on the habits of happiness.

Daniel Kahneman: The riddle of experience vs. memory.

Martin Seligman On Positive Psychology

Barry Schwartz on the paradox of choice

Acknowledgements

This self-help booklet is based on a five week course originally designed and run by Paul Newton and Ray Miller in October and November 2011 and modified in the light of the experience of course members. It represents only a simplified version of the course and additional information is available from:

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Caution

This booklet is not intended as an alternative to professional help or therapy for those who may be suffering a more serious depression. If in doubt, consult your Doctor.

Prof. Ray Miller

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Psychological Society and a registered Clinical and Health Psychologist (HCPC).