

## PSY 330: Positive Psychology: Gratitude Interventions/Techniques

*Gratitude promotes the savoring of positive life experiences and situations so that maximum satisfaction and enjoyment are distilled from one's circumstances.*

(Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005, p. 25)

### AR\_Gratitude Letter Assignment (70 pts Total)\_A Positive Psychology Project

Pick a person in your life whom you would like to thank, someone who has meant a lot to you. Please don't pick too easy a person for this. Rather than picking your roommate, boyfriend, or girlfriend, you should pick some special person in your life that has made a big impact, perhaps a bigger impact than they were aware of, and whom *you never adequately thanked* (e.g. a teacher, a parent, a coach, a mentor, etc.).

Write this person a letter. After you've written it, contact the person and ask to visit in person. **Read the letter aloud when you are face to face.** If a face-to-face visit is not possible, then read it over Skype (etc.) or at least over the phone - and then send them the letter. [Should the person be deceased, seriously consider a trip to the cemetery, etc.)

#### AFTER completing the Assignment:

**Part I: The Letter (20 pts):** Attach the content of the letter into this Assignment Manger. (*Be sure to add a sentence explaining to your professor who the person is if it is not obvious.*)

**Part II: The Visit (30 pts):** Points for the Visit will be included in the Gradebook. **Maximum points will ONLY be awarded for face to face visits** (this includes Skype; cemetery visit).

**Part III: Reflection (20 pts):** The next part of the assignment is for you to write up what happened as you carried out this assignment and how you felt doing so.

#### Grading (70 pts Total)\_There are 3 parts to this assignment:

1. Writing the Gratitude Letter (20 pts).
2. Visiting & Reading the Gratitude Letter to the person (30 pts).
3. Reflection on the experience (20 pts) [The Reflection will let me know you completed Part II].

**NOTE: Include BOTH the Letter & the Reflection as one paper and attach in the Assignment Manager.**

**DEADLINE:** This Assignment Manager will remain available until \_\_\_\_\_ (**Check the date in the Wk 14 Folder**)

*The two Exercises below are optional – recommended but not required.*

### **AR\_ 3 Blessings/3 Good Things**

Adapted from *A Primer in Positive Psychology*, Peterson, 2006.

For one week, every night before retiring write down three things that went well during the day. The three things you list can be relatively small in importance (e.g., My significant other picked up my favorite ice cream for dessert on the way home from work today.); or relatively large in importance (e.g., My sister just gave birth to a healthy baby girl.). After each positive event you list, answer in your own words the question “Why did this good thing happen?” For example, you might speculate that your significant other picked up the ice cream “because s/he can be really thoughtful” or “because I remembered to call him/her and remind him to stop by the grocery store.” When asked why your sister gave birth to a healthy baby girl, you might say “She did everything right during her pregnancy” or, if you are religiously inclined, you might say “God was looking out for her.”

This exercise has been shown to increase happiness and decrease symptoms of depression for up to six months. Long-term benefits occurred for participants who continued the exercise beyond the 1 week.

For Bob’s class in Positive Psychology, he suggests that after the first week you combine it with your Loving Kindness Compassion Meditation and when writing your weekly reflection, recall three “blessings” that occurred during the week.

### **AR\_Gratitude Journal**

The Gratitude Journal is an expansion on the 3 Blessings/3 Good Things exercise.

Think of the **gratitude journal** as a diary of things for which one is grateful. The gratitude journal is used to focus your attention on the positive things in your life. The gratitude journal is an ongoing exercise that will go beyond the course.

Gratitude, the feeling of appreciation or thanks, has gained a lot of attention in the field of positive psychology. Studies have found that those who are habitually grateful are significantly happier than those who are not. Furthermore, studies suggest that feelings of gratitude may even possess health benefits. Positive psychology strives to develop methods by which one can consistently enhance gratitude levels. The most popular method thus far is the maintenance of a gratitude journal. Furthermore, the maintenance of a gratitude journal can help relieve depressive symptoms.

Empirical research suggests that keeping a gratitude journal has a positive effect on one's psychological, physical, and emotional well-being. Regularly recording 3-10 things that one is grateful for can improve and strengthen one's physical and psychological health. Gratitude journals can also be beneficial as an addition to psychotherapy or clinical treatment to decrease symptoms of depression, increase happiness, and increase overall wellbeing.

**References:**

- Emmons & Crumpler, 2000; Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005
- Emmons, R.A., & Crumpler, C.A. (2000). Gratitude as a human strength: Appraising the evidence. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 19*, 56-69.
- Emmons, R. A., McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Social Psychology, Feb; 84(2); 377-89*
- Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology; 9(2) 111-13*
- Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *The American Psychologist, 2005 Jul-Aug; 60(5); 410-21*