

Gratitude Letter

Gratitude

Exercise

10-20 min

Client

Yes



Goal

The goal of this exercise is to increase gratitude and a sense of well-being by writing a gratitude letter.



Advice

- This exercise can be done just once or can be done regularly. Some studies asked participants to also deliver it and read it in person to the recipient, in addition to writing and reflecting on the letter. Although this can be a valuable experience, it may not be an option for all clients. For instance, a client may find it too difficult or uncomfortable to deliver and read the letter. This may reduce motivation. Given that improvements in well-being were only found in participants who were motivated to complete the exercise, it is important to consider this finding when doing this exercise.



References

- Lyubomirsky, S., Dickerhoof, R., Boehm, J.K., & Sheldon, K.M. (2011). Becoming happier takes both a will and a proper way: An experimental longitudinal intervention to boost well-being. *Emotion, 11*, 391-402.
- Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology, 9*, 111-131.
- Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist, 60*, 410-421.



Gratitude Letter

Instructions

Gratitude is a feeling of being thankful for the people and things in your life. The expression of gratitude brings positive emotions to those receiving and giving thanks. Yet, we do not always express our gratitude to the people in our lives. Here is your opportunity.

Choose someone in your life who has been helpful and kind to you, yet you have not had an opportunity to express your gratitude. This person can be a family member (parent, grandparent, child, spouse, etc.), a friend, teacher, or coach - anyone who has had a positive influence on your life but has never (or rarely) heard you express your gratitude. Take a moment to think about the things that this person has done that make you extremely grateful.

In this exercise, you are to write a letter of gratitude to this person. Take 10-20 minutes to write this letter, expressing your gratitude for what this person has contributed to your life. Use the following points as a guide to help you:

- Address the letter specifically to the person (e.g., "Dear...").
- Do not worry about grammar and spelling.
- Address the person directly throughout the letter.
- Describe specific things that this person has done that made you grateful and how this person's behavior has affected your life.
- End the letter in a way that identifies you as the writer (e.g., Sincerely..., or Love..., etc.).
- If possible, deliver the letter personally and ask the person to read the letter in your presence or read it aloud to him/her during your visit.