



# Gratitude

So many people had a hand in our success, from the teachers who inspired us to the janitors who kept the school clean.

-Michelle Obama

Monta Vista Character Lab 4  
First presented October 15, 2024

1



Gratitude is surprisingly hard to define or categorize! Is it:

- |                     |                            |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| an emotion          | a trait                    |
| an attitude         | an approach to a situation |
| a habit             | a virtue                   |
| a personality trait | a coping response          |

Robert Emmons

2

## Why Does Gratitude Matter?

- When you feel gratitude, you feel a sense of abundance.
- When you express gratitude—especially when it's heartfelt—you strengthen your relationships with others.
- Grateful people are happier and more fulfilled.
- Gratitude leads you to be nicer to other people: more cooperative, patient, and trusting.



3

## People Who Express Gratitude See the World Differently

### Grateful:

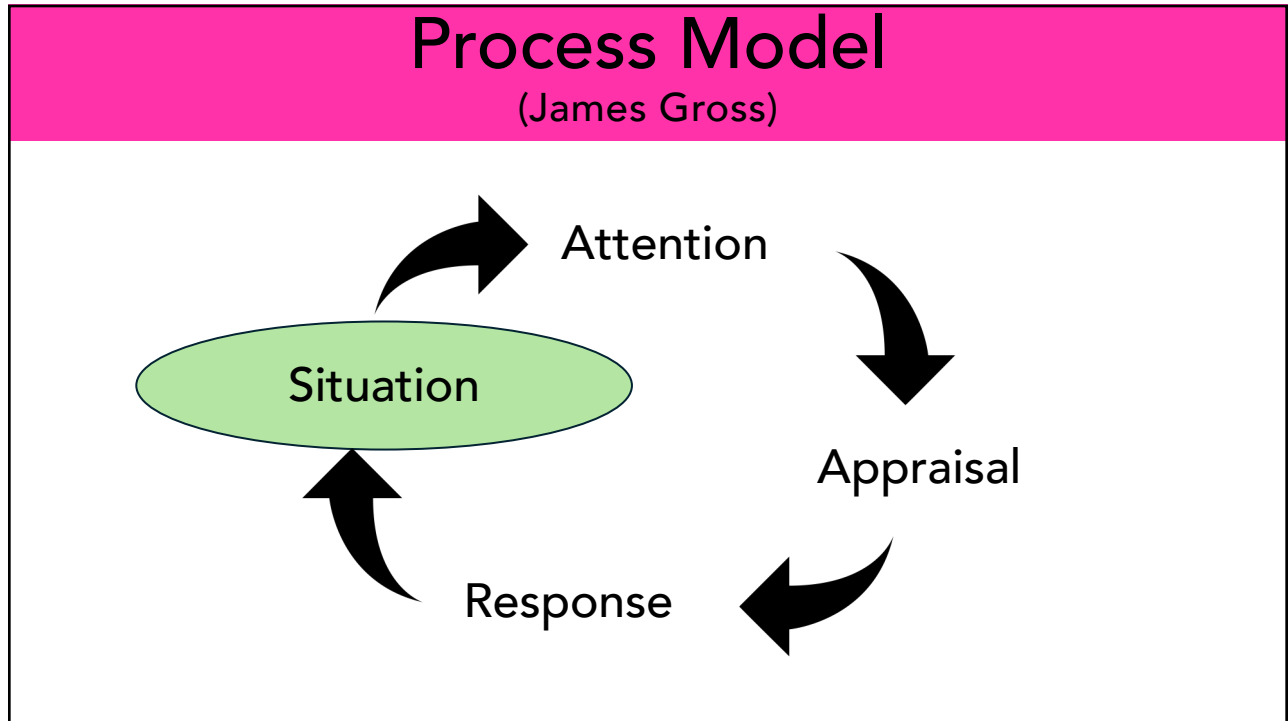
- Gifts
- Welcoming
- Interesting
- Blessed
- Improving
- Hopeful
- Fortunate
- Abundant



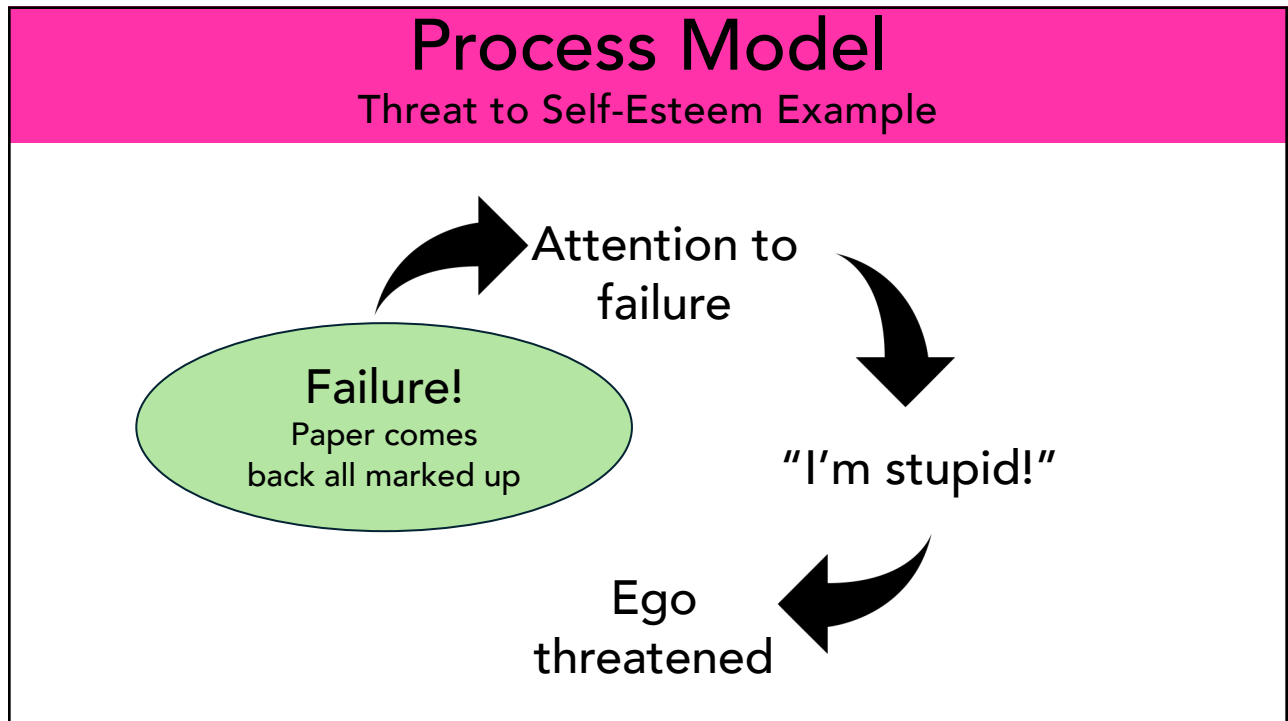
### Not so grateful:

- Deprivation
- Deservingness
- Blessings
- Regrets
- Lack
- Need
- Scarcity
- Loss

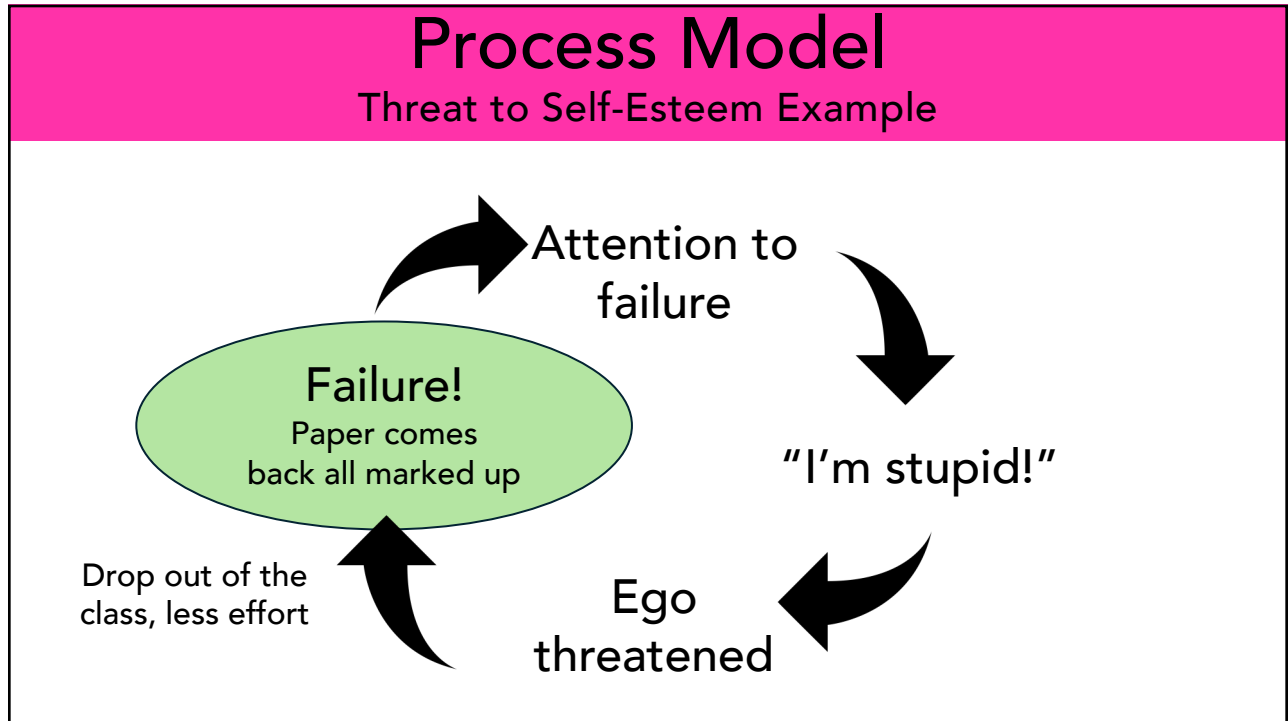
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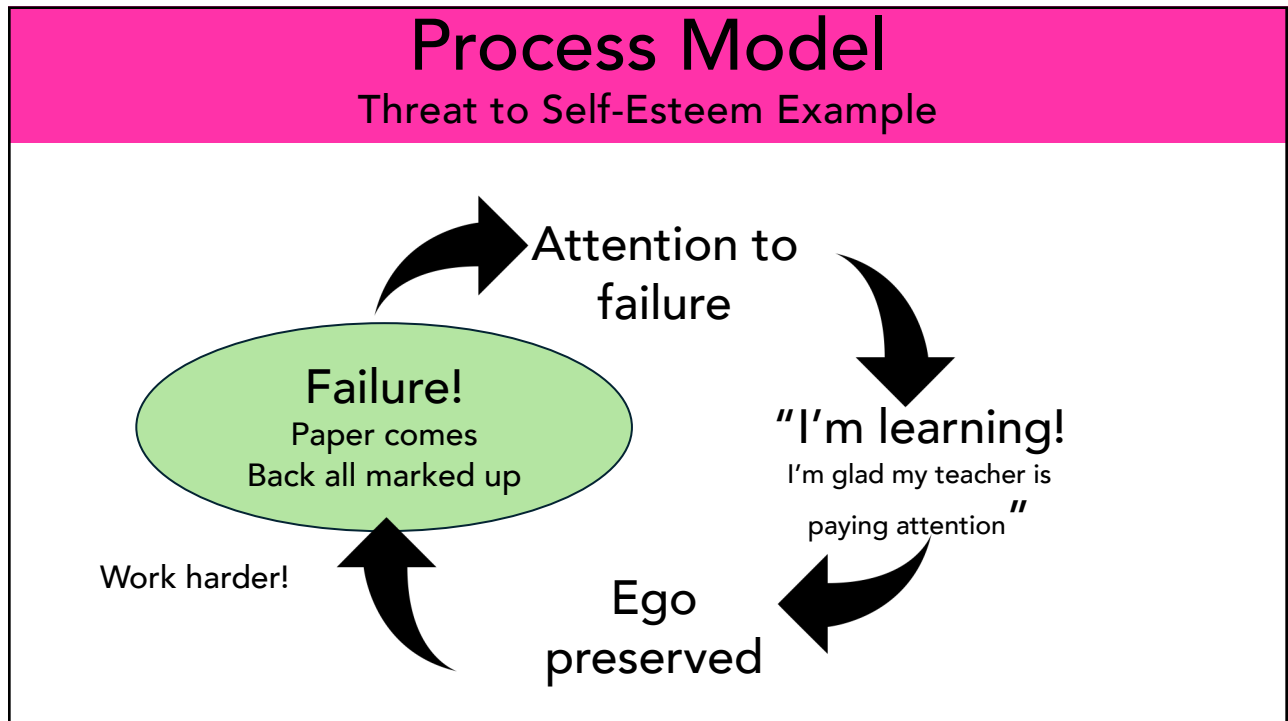
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6



7



8

## Gratitude

Appreciation for the benefits we receive, and the desire to reciprocate

A grateful person might think, "I get to go to class today," whereas an ungrateful person might think, "Why do I have to learn all this useless stuff?"

A grateful person might think, "I ran further today than I did last week," whereas an ungrateful person might think, "I wish I were as fast as her."

9

## Subtle Impacts of Gratitude That We Feel

We realize what a positive impact we can have on people around us.

We reflect upon the many good things in our lives.



10

## What Research Tells Us

Gratitude correlates with positive life outcomes.

Gratitude is positively related to hope, forgiveness, pride, contentment, optimism, inspiration, and overall positive affect.

Studies have shown that people can build and improve their gratitude.



11

## Gratitude Letters

Write a letter to a person who has influenced your life in a positive way (for example, a teacher, relative, mentor or coach).



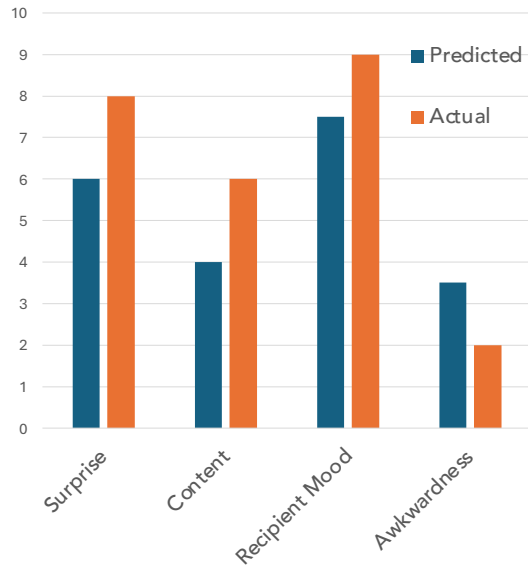
See: Seligman, M.E.P, Steen, T.A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60(5), 410-421.

12

# Gratitude Letters

Write a letter to a person who has influenced your life in a positive way (for example, a teacher, relative, mentor or coach).

- Focus on the positive influence of another person in your life.
- It reminds you that someone cares about you.
- Reminds you that you matter.
- The experience may be more than you expected!



Kumar, A & Epley, N (2018). Undervaluing gratitude: Expressors misunderstand the consequences of showing appreciation.

13

Gmail Kirk Flatow <coach.flatow@gmail.com>

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**thank you for the thank you**  
3 messages

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**Angela Duckworth** [Redacted] Wed, Jun 19, 2024 at 7:22 AM  
 To: Kirk Flatow <coach.flatow@gmail.com>

1. at the risk of infinite regress, thank you for the thank you kirk.  
 2. i love that it was handwritten  
 3. i love that the stationary was white clouds against a blue sky  
 4. i don't even know where you buy stationary, but there's something just wonderful about it  
 5. am i even worthy of this gratitude?  
 6. the fact that you're slightly older and in many ways wiser makes me realize that mentoring can be domain-specific, in the domain of psychological science, and i'm happy to be your mentor. i've been here longer than you and have made it my calling.  
 7. i've noticed that you used to talk about your kids with qualifiers but not they're just your kids. i love that. they "are" your kids.  
 8. i have a book recommendation, because it says a lot about coaching and also about what a young person needs. beatown. almost done. massive fan of the author, who i now realize writes modern-day parables we all need to hear...  
 9. in sum, thank you! so happy that sometimes you help me, and sometimes i help you, and that together we share this allegiance to kids...who are everything :)

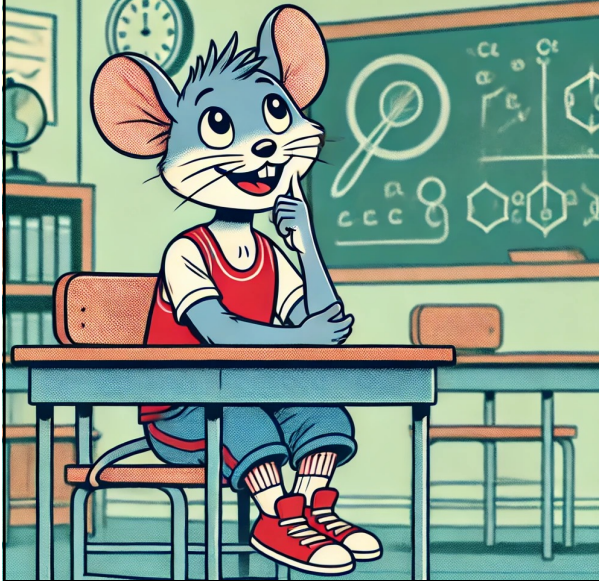
**Angela Duckworth**  
 Rosa Lee and Egbert Chang Professor, [University of Pennsylvania](#)  
 Faculty Co-Director, [Behavior Change For Good Initiative](#)  
 Co-Host, [Freakonomics No Stupid Questions](#)

[Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Character Lab](#)

*My work hours may not be your work hours. Reply if you want to, when you want to...*

14

## How to Write A Great Gratitude Letter



- Ponder your message!
- Be explicit about what you are thankful for
- What is the impact on your life?
- Tell them you remember!
- If you are up for it, deliver in person
- Bonus: Read it aloud to them!

("Cool is the enemy" –Chris Peterson)

15

## How to Write A Great Gratitude Letter



- What do you remember them doing or saying?
- What is an important memory or experience from your time with them?
- How would your life be different if you had not met?
- What character strengths do you appreciate most?
- What makes them special/important in your life story?

16



## Gratitude Journal: Record the things you are grateful for, regularly

- How long should I take:
  - 10 minutes per entry should be good!
- How do I do it?
  - Keep a journal where you write, in detail, about things you are grateful for in your life.
- How does it work?
  - The exercise helps you notice what is going well in your life.



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 Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(2), 377-389.

17

## Gratitude Journal: How To Do It

- Write a direct answer to the prompt you choose.
- Provide details!
- Go for depth (write more about one thing) and avoid breadth (a little about several things) in your entry.
- Explain the “why”...push to go deep on why this person, experience, or thing makes you grateful.

### Suggested Prompts:

- Think of a person in your life you are grateful for, and write about why you are grateful for them.
- Describe an experience or event that you didn't like in the moment, but looking back was an experience you are grateful for now.
- Think about a time when you were worried something bad would happen—but it didn't. What happened instead, and how do you feel now?
- What is something that you take for granted, but contributes to your life?
- Think of someone who helped you. Who might have helped that person in their life?
- Think of an activity you enjoy, a sport or hobby. How did you come to appreciate it?
- What is something good that surprised you lately?

Adapted from work done by Angela Duckworth and her team.

18

**Three Good Things:**  
Practice noticing three good things that happen to you, every day.

This should take 10 minutes or less.

Write down three things that went well for you, and explain why they went well.

This brief exercise helps you reflect on the good things that happen to you every day; over time, this will become a habit.

19

Three Good Things:  
At the end of the day, write down 3 things that went well for you and why.

Date	1	2	3

20

There are blank thank-you cards in shed 2 for whenever you want to write a gratitude note!



21

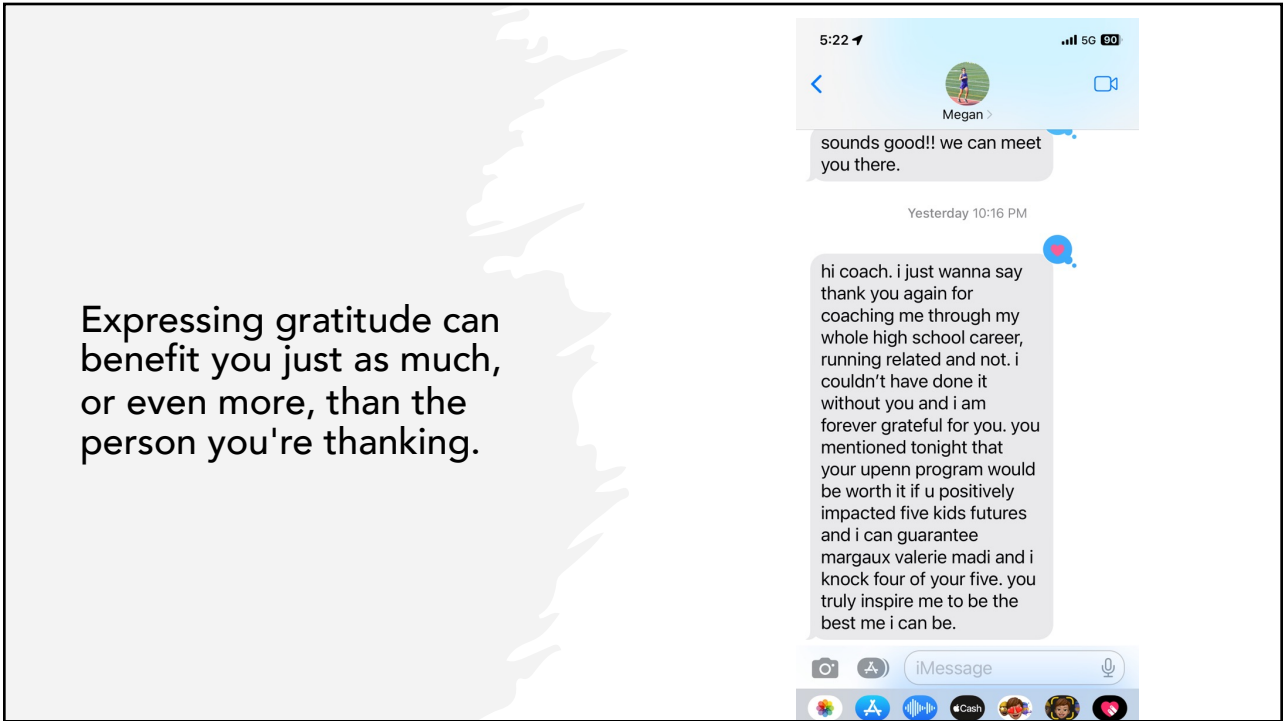


Think of developing a gratitude habit like changing your diet...the more bizarre the diet, the harder it is to stick with it.

You need to find an intervention that makes sense for you in your life.

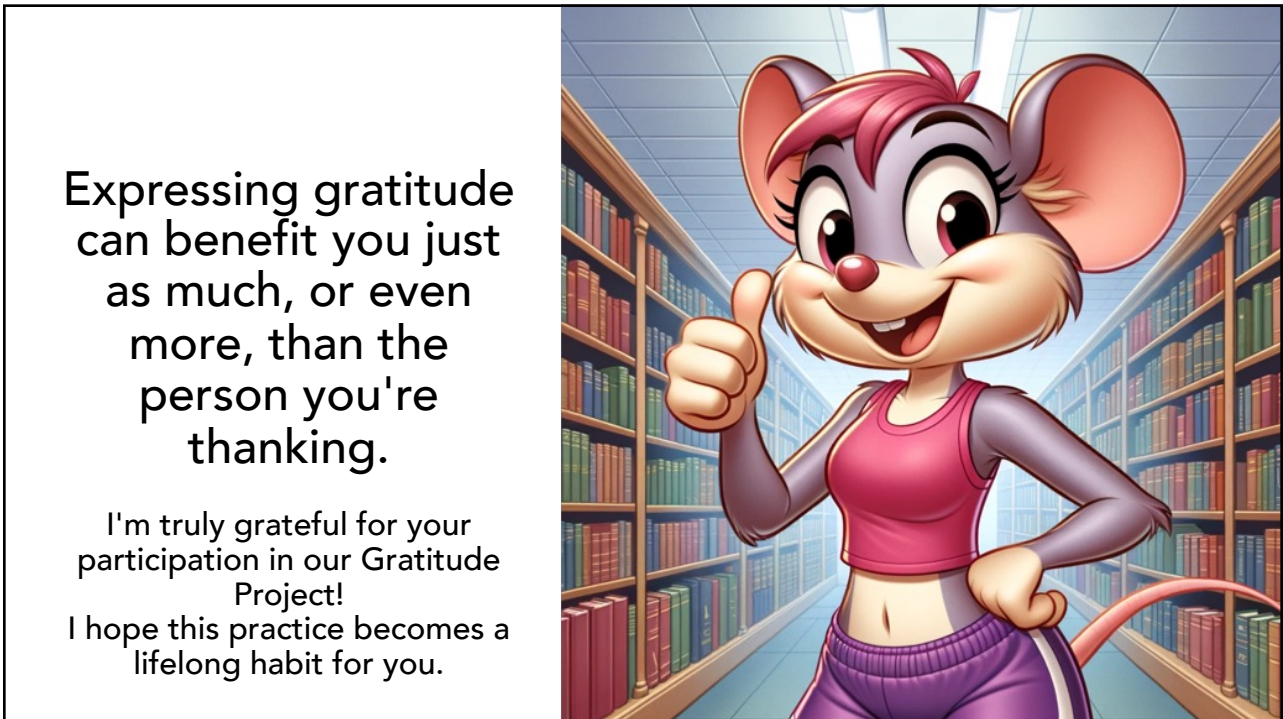
Pick something that feels easy for you.

22



Expressing gratitude can benefit you just as much, or even more, than the person you're thanking.

23



Expressing gratitude can benefit you just as much, or even more, than the person you're thanking.

I'm truly grateful for your participation in our Gratitude Project!  
I hope this practice becomes a lifelong habit for you.

24

## References and Further Reading

### Emmons is the man and he taught at UC Davis

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