



Communities  
of Wellbeing

## Gratitude Letter

### 1. Why you should try it

Feeling gratitude can improve health and happiness; expressing gratitude also strengthens relationships. Yet sometimes expressions of thanks can be fleeting and superficial. This exercise encourages you to express gratitude in a thoughtful, deliberate way by writing – and, ideally, delivering – a letter of gratitude to a person you have never properly thanked.

*"Be content with what you have, rejoice in the way things are.  
When you realise there is nothing lacking, the whole world belongs  
to you"*

LAO TZU

### 2. How to do it

Call to mind someone who did something for you for which you are extremely grateful but to whom you never expressed your deep gratitude. This could be a relative, friend, teacher, or colleague. Try to pick someone who is still alive and could meet you face-to-face in the next week. It may be most helpful to select a person or act that you haven't thought about for a while – something that isn't always on your mind.

**Now, write a letter to one of these people, guided by the following steps:**

**Write** as though you are addressing this person directly ("Dear \_\_\_\_\_").

**Don't worry** about perfect grammar or spelling.

**Describe in specific terms** what this person did, why you are grateful to this person, and how this person's behaviour affected your life. Try to be as concrete as possible.

**Describe** what you are doing in your life now and how you often remember their efforts.

**Try** to keep your letter to roughly one page (approx. 300 words)

**Next, you should try if at all possible to deliver your letter in person, following these steps:**

**Plan a visit** with the recipient. Let that person know you'd like to see them and have something special to share, but don't reveal the exact purpose of the meeting.

**When you meet**, let the person know that you are grateful to them and would like to read a letter expressing your gratitude; ask that they refrain from interrupting until you're done.

**Take your time** reading the letter. While you read, pay attention to their reaction as well as your own.

**After** you have read the letter, be receptive to their reaction and discuss your feelings together.

**Remember** to give the letter to the person when you leave.

*"A single rose can be my garden...a single friend my world."*

LEO BUSCAGLIA

### **3. Why it works**

The letter affirms positive things in your life and reminds you how others have cared for you – life seems less bleak and lonely if someone has taken such a supportive interest in us. Visiting the giver allows you to strengthen your connection with them and remember how others value you as an individual.