

Three Good Things

Write down three things that went well today — and why they happened.

15 min practice + 5 min journal

Standard practice

Handwritten journal, dated & timed

GGIA difficulty: Casual



1 Why you should try it

In our day-to-day lives, it's easy to get caught up in the things that go wrong and feel like we're living under our own private rain cloud; at the same time, we tend to adapt to the good things and people in our lives, taking them for granted. As a result, we often overlook everyday beauty and goodness — a kind gesture from a stranger, say, or the warmth of our heater on a chilly morning. In the process, we frequently miss opportunities for happiness and connection.

This practice guards against those tendencies. By remembering and listing three positive things that have happened in your day — and considering what caused them — you tune into the sources of goodness in your life. It's a habit that can change the emotional tone of your life, replacing feelings of disappointment or entitlement with those of gratitude — which may be why this practice is associated with significant increases in happiness.

2 The session — Prof. Magee's 15-minute protocol

Follow these timings, not the website's. Set a timer. One session = the 15 minutes below, then 5 minutes of journaling immediately after. At least 4 sessions in your 2-week window — ideally daily, before bed. Each session covers a different day.

2'

3'

3'

3'

4'

2 Settle and scan

MIN

Sit somewhere quiet, ideally near the end of your day. Breathe slowly for a few breaths, then replay the day from the moment you woke up. Let the good moments surface — small ones count ("my roommate made coffee") as much as big ones.

3 Good thing #1

MIN

Give the event a title. Write exactly what happened in as much detail as you can — what you did or said, and if others were involved, what they did or said. Then write how it made you feel at the time and how it makes you feel now, remembering it. Finish with the key line: *why did this happen? What caused it?*

3 Good thing #2

MIN

Same recipe: title, detail, feelings then and now, and the cause. If your mind drifts to something negative, notice it and steer back to the good event and the feelings that came with it. That takes effort at first and gets easier.

3 Good thing #3

MIN

Title, detail, feelings then and now, cause. Try to make this one different in kind from the first two (a person, a place, something you did, something done for you).

4 Reread and savor

MIN

Read all three entries slowly. Sit with the feeling for a moment. Circle the one you most want to notice again tomorrow — the practice works partly by teaching your attention where to look.

3 Then journal — 5 minutes, by hand

- Top of the entry: **date and time**. Entries without both lose credit.
- Write for **5 minutes without stopping** (about 300 words). Messy is fine; stopping is not.
- Before / during / after: how did you feel at each point? Be specific — body, mood, thoughts.
- What surprised you? What felt fake, awkward, or easier than expected?
- **Prompt:** Which of the three was hardest to find, and what does that tell you about where your attention usually goes?
- **Prompt:** Did explaining the *cause* change how the event felt? People, luck, effort — who or what gets the credit?

4 Evidence that it works

Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005)

Visitors to a website received instructions for performing this exercise. Writing about three good things was associated with increased happiness immediately afterward, as well as one week, one month, three months, and six months later.

5 Why it works

By giving you the space to focus on the positive, this practice teaches you to notice, remember, and savor the better things in life. It may prompt you to pay closer attention to positive events down the road and engage in them more fully — both in the moment and later on, when you can reminisce and share these experiences with others. Reflecting on the cause of the event may help attune you to the deeper sources of goodness in your life, fostering a mindset of gratitude.

6 Know the research — for your presentation (APA 7)

In your presentation you will explain, **from memory and without notes**, the evidence behind each practice — who studied it, when, and what they found — plus something *not* written on the GGIA site or on this handout. Read these papers (SJNY library or Google Scholar), then follow their citations forward to find **your own article** — one more peer-reviewed study on this topic that is not the source study here (due Sun Dec 6). Take photos along the way; they are your slides.

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. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.60.5.410>

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. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.2.377>

Adapted for PSY 251 from Greater Good in Action, Greater Good Science Center, UC Berkeley — original at <https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/three-good-things>. Practice sources: Jeffrey Huffman, M.D., Harvard Medical School; Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D., University of California, Riverside. Timings, session structure, and journal rules are Prof. Magee's and override the website's.