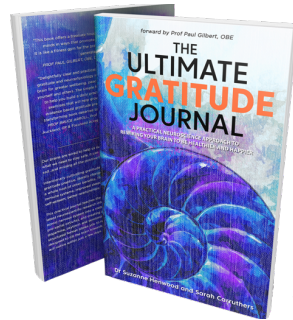


A Special Taster Inside

The Ultimate Gratitude Journal:

A practical neuroscience approach to rewiring
your brain to be healthier and happier



Thank you for buying The Ultimate Gratitude Journal and for investing in yourself. This special taster has been designed to give you something to nibble on while you wait for your Journal to arrive. Its goal is to enable you to dive straight in and to make it easy for you to start learning how take care of your mind and hone your ability to focus on the good in life. Written by Dr Suzanne Henwood and Sarah Carruthers, and with a Foreword by Prof Paul Gilbert, OBE, The Ultimate Gratitude Journal joins modern neuroscience with practical tools to help you rewire your brain for the better. We hope you enjoy it.

Introduction

The brain is like Velcro for negative experiences, but Teflon for positive ones.

Our brains have an in-built negativity bias: designed not to make us happy, but to help us survive. But by focusing on what's wrong, and keeping us safe, it can lead us to feeling stressed, worried, fearful, sad...even though there are lots of positive things going on in our lives.

The good news is that there are many ways we can interrupt our negativity bias and rewire our brains for happiness and positivity. Just like much of our body is built from the foods we eat, our mind is built from the experiences and thoughts we have (and keep having). The flow of experience and thinking gradually sculpts our brain, thus shaping our mind and directing our experience of life. If we want to reduce our brain's negativity bias we have to learn to take in the good – to foster positive experiences and thinking and change our behaviours until they become a part of who we are.

Gratitude is one of the simplest and most effective ways to retrain our brains.

What is gratitude?

“Gratitude is not just a social construct; it's a real neurobiological phenomenon that is powerful for bringing a deepened sense of well-being, connectedness and enhancing our relationship to self, others and all things.” - Dr. Andrew Huberman, Neuroscientist

Gratitude is a mindset that activates your Prefrontal Cortex (which sets the context and provides meaning to life's experiences), such that it can generate tremendous health and wellbeing benefits. It is also a deliberate embodied practice of focusing on, relishing and absorbing the good in our own and others' lives. It is an affirmation of the goodness, gifts and benefits in our lives and the world.

What can gratitude give you?

Intentionally cultivating gratitude on a daily basis, activates the pro-social circuits in our brains which literally changes the wiring of the neural pathways, as well as a whole host of other benefits; increased happiness, stronger immune systems, improved sleep, better emotional regulation, enhanced self-esteem, increased empathy, better relationships, more productivity and increased resilience. But most gratitude practices (e.g. listing things you might be grateful for) are too simplistic, only head based and don't actually lead to positive benefits or changes in brain circuitry and how we experience life.

The most potent form of gratitude practice needs to involve story –associating and experiencing empathy/compassion for someone who received help (whether that is help you gave, heard about, or was given to you by someone you connected with). To be effective you must genuinely and emotionally associate with the story, wholeheartedly reflect on it and take it in, feeling it in your heart and taking action from the gut. Research shows that if you express your gratitude directly to someone who has helped you (i.e. take action on feeling it), it can further increase your sense of happiness by up to 19%. The Ultimate Gratitude Practice is way more than just thinking about gratitude.

The Ultimate Gratitude Practice

The Ultimate Gratitude Journal teaches the most potent gratitude practice, based on the latest neuroscientific research. It combines stimulating the autonomic nervous system into a state of calm alertness; accessing heart and gut brains; enhancing the practice, storytelling; activating the pro-social circuits and taking in the good, which together create a neurochemical signature that releases dopamine, oxytocin and serotonin (the feel good chemicals). Its' simple structured format is designed to rewire and tilt the brain towards the benefits associated with the pro-social circuits, enabling more effective interactions with ourselves and others, so that they become our default way of thinking and being.

There are three components:

1. Breathing

PET (Positron Emission Tomography) studies show 5-10 minutes of stillness each day, combined with gratitude, creates a neurochemical signature in the body that releases dopamine, serotonin

and oxytocin. Dr Andrew Huberman describes this powerful combination as being similar to what “MDMA or ecstasy is designed to do but without ingesting anything.” A scientifically effective way to quiet ourselves is to use the simple practice of balanced breathing.

There are many styles and practices of breathing. One of the most powerful and relevant here is balanced (also known as coherent) breathing as it stimulates the autonomic nervous system into a state of calm alertness. So each day your gratitude practice begins with a few minutes of gentle balanced breathing to enhance the positive effects of gratitude. This involves allowing your breath to fall into an easy, deep and even rhythm e.g. six seconds in and six seconds out (or whatever count feels right for you). You can listen to a recording of how to do the balanced breathing process at bit.ly/3PRn7L9 so you can start that today.

2. Gratitude Story

As you continue to breathe gently and evenly, bring to mind and feel into your meaningful gratitude story. Focus on your heart and feel when you are truly experiencing gratitude. The story you choose needs to be one that deeply resonates with you and involves someone either giving or receiving help. It could be yourself or someone that inspires you from a book/podcast/movie. Ideally the person in the story overcomes a struggle and feels genuine gratitude for the help. You can listen to a couple of examples of stories from the book at bit.ly/3PRn7L9. You can use those, or you can feel into one of your own. Once you have chosen your story, jot down a few bullet points about how you perceive the person who experienced the struggle felt as they overcame their challenges. What help did they get/give? And how does this make YOU feel? Imagining this Theory of Mind enables the gratitude circuits in your Prefrontal Cortex to light up amplifying the experience.

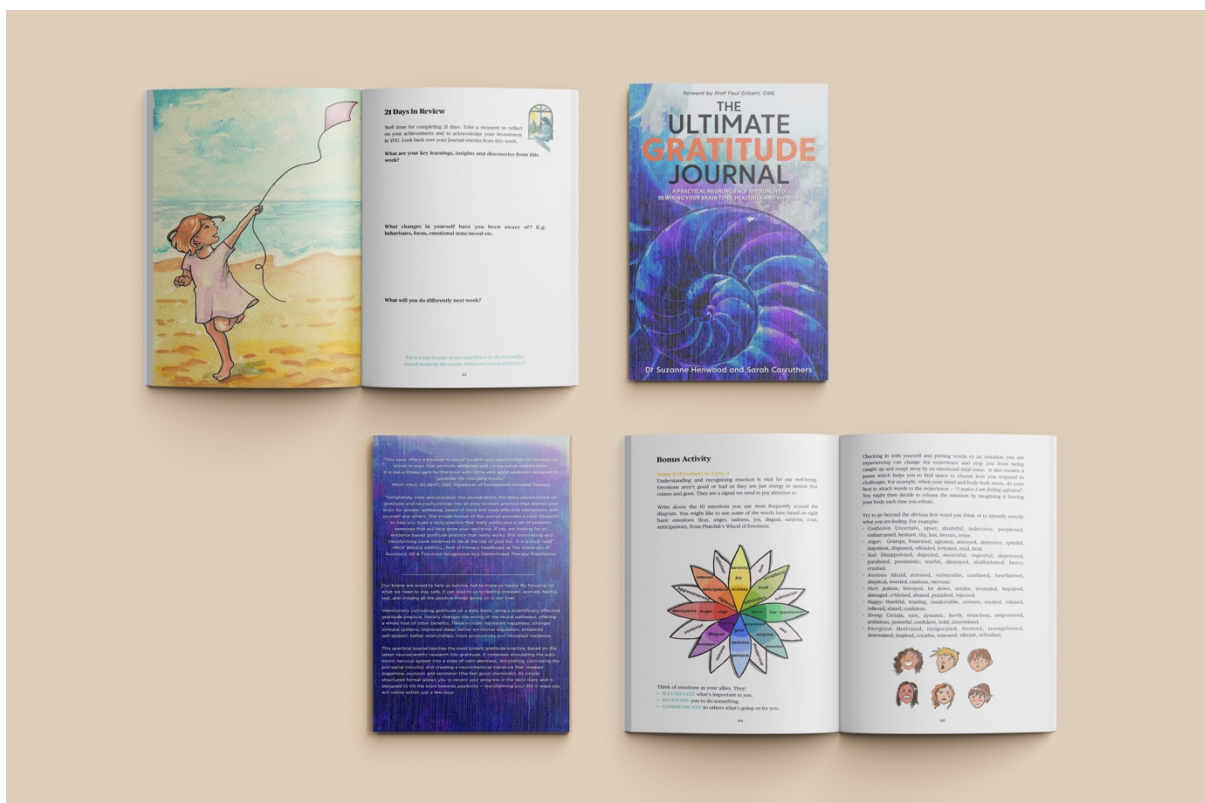
Each day, following your balanced breathing practice, begin to imagine the story as if you were there now, experiencing it, seeing, feeling, hearing, smelling and tasting it (where relevant). Really amplify those sensations. Fill your heart with the story and the positive emotions arising from it (gratitude, loving kindness etc.) then amplify the feelings, sounds and images, making them bigger, stronger, louder, bolder, brighter – just like adjusting the volume/colour on your TV until it’s just perfect for you.

3. Gratitude Journal

As you continue to breathe in an even rhythm and focus on the feeling of the strong, positive emotion in your heart, you begin to add notes to your journal using the diary created to guide and support you. This may include: additional stories about others or the help you are grateful for in your life; other positive things in your life; positive changes; growth areas etc. We have included a simple yet deeply embodied mBraining process in the journal to support you in this.

What else will your journal include?

- A deep dive into an effective (and scientifically robust) daily gratitude practice designed to bring you a deepened sense of wellbeing, connectedness and enhanced relationship to self and others.
- Step by step guide to establishing a positive pattern of thinking - one that will tilt your brain away from its' natural negativity bias - in just five minutes per day.
- Weekly challenges to help you stay motivated, build resilience and remain calm in the face of adversity.
- Inspirational prompts and reflections that draw on your body's multiple intelligences (heart, head, gut, pelvis and autonomic nervous system) enabling deeper wisdom to emerge.
- Beautiful illustrations and colouring pages to help you stay motivated and kick-start your creativity.
- A way to document your growth and evolution over time.
- Daily inspirational quotes and reflections.
- New practices based on the latest neuroscience and mBraining.
- A fun and unique way to make every day a gratitude-filled one!



Enjoy getting started and the book will be with you very soon.

What others are saying

“This book offers a treasure house of insights and opportunities to develop our minds in ways that promote wellbeing and caring social relationships. It is like a fitness gym for the brain with some very good workouts designed to generate life-changing results.”

PROF PAUL GILBERT, OBE, Developer of Compassion Focused Therapy

“Delightfully clear and practical, this journal distils the latest neuroscience on gratitude and neurophysiology into an easy-to-learn practice that rewires your brain for greater wellbeing, peace of mind and more effective interactions with yourself and others. The simple format of this journal provides a clear blueprint to help you build a daily practice that really works plus a set of powerful exercises that will help grow your resilience. If you are looking for an evidence based gratitude practice that really works, this illuminating and transforming book deserves to be at the top of your list. It is a must read”

PROF BRUCE ARROLL, Prof of Primary Healthcare at The University of Auckland,
GP & Focussed Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Practitioner

“Sarah and Suzanne have provided a clear blueprint for cultivating a happier, more resilient life. Their process helps activate the reward centre of the brain, reduce toxic emotions and acts as a catalyst for feeling better about ourselves and our lives. As anxiety, stress and depression continues to rise, this book couldn’t have come at a better time”

CLIVE TEARE, Coach and Trainer

About the Authors

Dr Suzanne Henwood is a highly-sought after author, trainer, coach, and keynote speaker. She specialises in stress and anxiety, research, leadership, personal excellence, deep transformational change and working with workplace stress, psychological safety, and bullying. With a diverse background which includes a career as a radiographer, an Associate Professor at Unitec Faculty of Social and Health Sciences, Coach and Awakener, Suzanne likes to match academic insights with real life wisdom. She is a warm, curious and inspirational coach with a vast knowledge in her field.

Sarah Carruthers is an internationally recognised neurocoach, educator, researcher and strategist who has taught the principles of embodied intelligence to individuals and organisations for twenty years. Her approach to helping people be at home in themselves and at ease in the world is grounded, playful, compassionate and intelligent. When not working with clients or facilitating trainings, you can find Sarah poking, peering and wondering at the wonderful things cast upon her local beach with her husband and two girls outside of New Plymouth, New Zealand where she lives.

Together, Sarah and Suzanne co-founded The Luminosity Project which inspires, empowers and supports people to bring the best of who they are to everything they do – to let their light shine, creating a positive ripple effect in the world. We help people on their journey to radical wholeness – to find the way back to themselves, each other and to source.

We hope you enjoyed reading this taster into The Ultimate Gratitude Journal. Join our mailing list to get updates on other great tools, books and workshops www.theluminosityproject.nz

