

# WEEK TWO

## SOFTENING THE GRIP OF NEGATIVITY

### GRATITUDE, THE BODY, AND THE MIND

**Have you ever noticed that, for some people, pessimism comes more naturally than optimism?** For many people, expecting the worst, and being prepared for it, is the smartest way to get ahead and avoid being hurt.

This slant toward the negative isn't just a question of personality. The human mind **is** generally biased toward negativity and fear. **But that doesn't mean we are doomed to a joyless life!** What it does mean is that accounting for our negative bias and building an appropriate habit of optimism takes an extra dose of intention, attention, and effort.

This is actually fantastic news! **It means we have the ability to habitually choose our frame of mind.** We can choose to act from a place of optimism (and yes, gratitude!) even if we're not feeling it in the moment. We make that choice because we know the incredible quality-of-life benefits that come from that choice - more contentment, peace, a sense of well-being and a positive relationship with the world, not to mention how *good* it feels in the body - expansive, uplifting, energizing, and motivational!

Like anything that involves a measure of effort and emotional investment, the reward and impact on our lives is even greater when we have to work for it. **By having to choose gratitude deliberately, we come to appreciate its value because we put effort into it.** It compounds the already positive effect.

*(continued on the next page)*

Just in case your own negativity bias might be poised to kick into high gear, let me be very clear about one thing: **there is no such thing as a person who is born without the capacity to grow their gratitude.** Gratitude, just like those pesky negative emotions, is already pre-programmed into the human experience. You may not have developed a lot of skill yet, but it is something you can improve. **It does become easier!**

Looking ahead, remember the mini challenge from last week? Guess what! **This week, it becomes part of your regular practice to help establish long-term gratitude habits.** This is now part of your Habit Builder work. There is also a new symbol to add to your tracker when you have done a Habit Builder exercise. You don't need to wait until you have filled in the entire page to add it to your tracker. Every time you do the activity, it counts! Our new symbol looks like this:



HABIT BUILDER

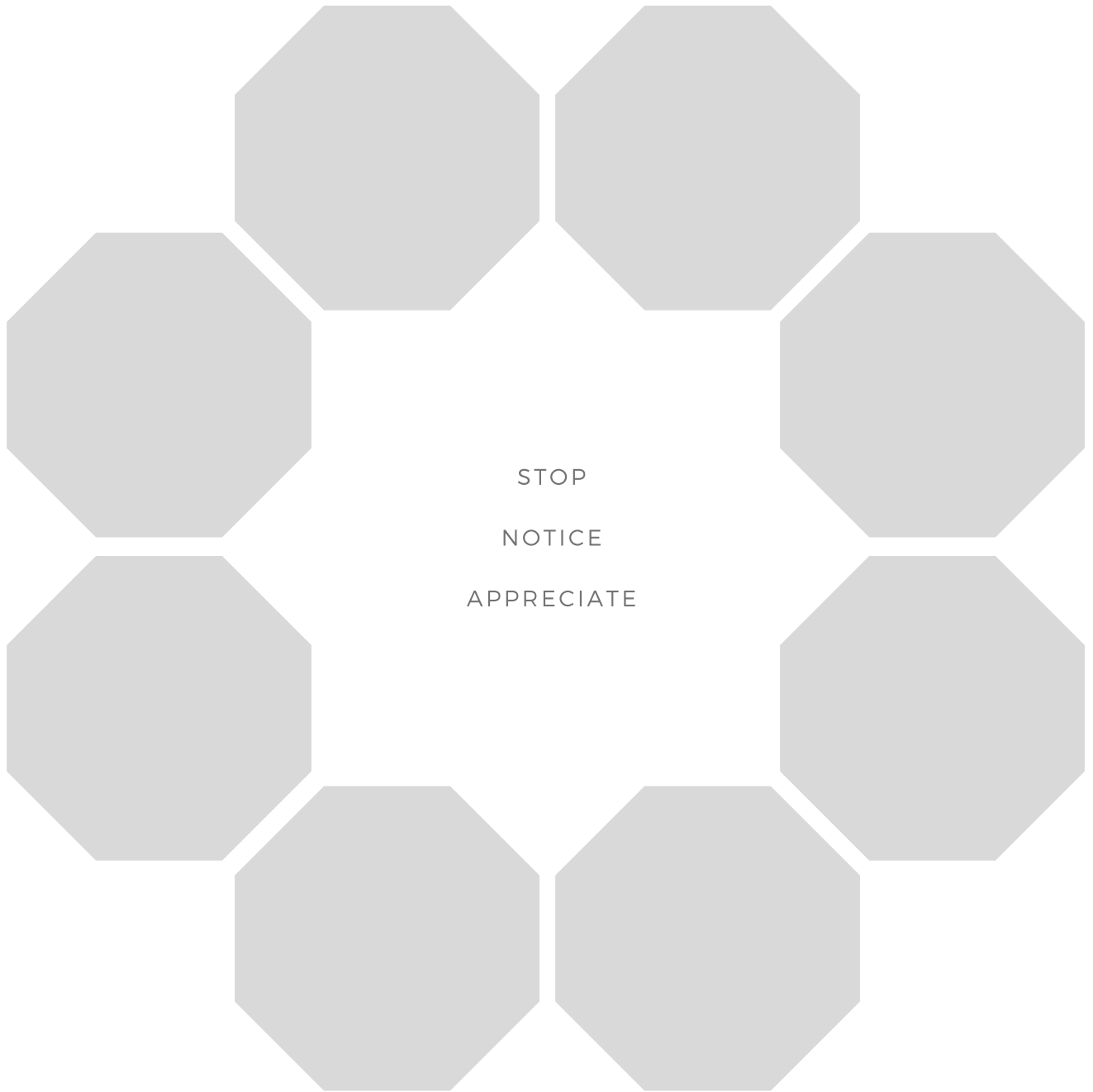
**So, my friend, whenever you're ready to tackle that tricky negativity bias, turn to the next pages and dive in!**

**Next Steps:** If you haven't already, listen to this week's Food For Thought mini podcast episode and then turn to Worksheet 8 on page 22 to kick off your Week Two reflections!



# WORKSHEET 7

HABIT BUILDER: PRACTICING GRATITUDE IN THE MOMENT



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# WORKSHEET 8

REFLECTION: RISING ABOVE NEGATIVITY

What general challenges and frustrations am I struggling with at the moment?

How do I feel emotionally and physically when I think about them?

*(Questions continue on the next page)*



WKSHT 8, CONT.

What positive things have I experienced over the last several days? Please go into detail!

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How do I feel emotionally and physically after changing my focus?

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*(Continued on the next page)*



WKSHT 8, *CONT.*

Which perspective (positive or negative) was easier to write about?

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Which perspective left me feeling better and in what ways?

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**Next Steps:** Give yourself a break and come back tomorrow. Begin by listening to the "Changing Perspective" Meditation (using Worksheet 9 on page 25).



# WORKSHEET 9

## GUIDED MEDITATION: CHANGING PERSPECTIVE

**INSTRUCTIONS:** To complete this exercise, you will need about 20 minutes of quiet, uninterrupted time for yourself. When you are ready, begin by noting your mental and emotional state before listening to the guided meditation in the space provided below. Then, listen to the **'Changing Perspective' Meditation** found through the link in your **Week Two Email**.

Afterward, without rushing, give yourself a few minutes to check in with your body and then continue with your reflections.

## GUIDED MEDITATION: FINDING GRATITUDE IN THE MOMENT

BEFORE I FELT...

AFTER I FELT...



TIME OF DAY

REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS

**Next Steps:** There's no rush to move on! Enjoy any relaxation or peace you might have found through this meditation. When you do eventually feel ready to move on, watch this week's 'Going Deeper' video.

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# WORKSHEET 10

## HABIT BUILDER: REFRAMING FROM NEGATIVE TO POSITIVE

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Over the next day or two, observe any tendency you might have toward negative thoughts. When you catch yourself in a negative thought pattern, take a moment to acknowledge that your bias may be in play. Then, look for ways to reframe the situation in a more positive light. Is there a silver lining? Could things be worse? What opportunity is buried in this difficult situation? Record your negative to positive reframe below.

NEGATIVE THOUGHT:



POSITIVE REFRAME:

NEGATIVE THOUGHT:



POSITIVE REFRAME:

NEGATIVE THOUGHT:



POSITIVE REFRAME:

NEGATIVE THOUGHT:



POSITIVE REFRAME:

**Next Steps:** When you feel ready, even if you haven't quite finished all of your negative to positive reframes, turn to page 27 for your Mid-Week Mini Challenge.



# MID-WEEK MINI CHALLENGE

## HOW TO

Welcome to your second mini challenge! As always, the goal of this challenge is to gently stretch your current practice of gratitude by trying something new and maybe even slightly out of your comfort zone. This is where all that juicy personal growth really happens!

Over the next several days, **your challenge is to have three different conversations** in which you deliberately **steer the direction of the conversation toward positive experiences** instead of negative ones.

Recognizing that we can't control other people, we **are** able to choose how our side of the conversation goes. Maybe share a small moment of delight or share an unexpected, welcome surprise. Mention a kind act you witnessed and how it uplifted your spirit. **The point is to practice something different from our natural negative tendencies.**

The rules are pretty flexible. You can have three different conversations with the same person, or you can push yourself a little more out of your comfort zone and try this out in different contexts with different people. See how it goes!

Before I ask you to take the plunge, however, I want to acknowledge something very important. The last thing I want you to do is gloss over, minimize, or ignore any significant difficulties you may be facing at the moment. **Sometimes life is really hard and we need to speak honestly about our challenges and feelings of sadness or overwhelm.** If those kinds of conversations are a pressing need in your life, please seek out the support you need before attempting anything else.

*(Continued on the next page)*

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If you are in a more neutral emotional space, however, I encourage you to step up to the challenge and talk about the good things that have landed in your day - big and small! **Our ability to dwell on the positives is typically a bit underdeveloped, so we need to practice it.** And that's what this exercise is all about!

**Stay open to the process and have fun with the challenge.** You may notice that some people would really prefer to stay in the negative, so feel free to make a bit of a game out of trying to sway them to the other side or, at the very least, try to avoid getting pulled in. As always, it isn't so important that you complete this challenge right away, just that you do it! **Keep up the great work!**

**Next Steps:** Complete the Mini Challenge in your own time and come back at the end of the week for the 'Release and Re-Center' Guided Meditation. If you need a little inspiration in the meantime, check out some uplifting thoughts and perspectives on gratitude in the Mid-Week Pick-Me-Up section on the webpage.



# ★ WORKSHEET 11

MID-WEEK MINI CHALLENGE: SPREADING THE [POSITIVE] WORD

## ✔ CONVERSATION #1 DATE:

WHO I TALKED WITH

WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT

MY THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, OBSERVATIONS, REALIZATIONS...

## ✔ CONVERSATION #2 DATE:

WHO I TALKED WITH

WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT

MY THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, OBSERVATIONS, REALIZATIONS...

## ✔ CONVERSATION #3 DATE:

WHO I TALKED WITH

WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT

MY THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, OBSERVATIONS, REALIZATIONS...



# WORKSHEET 12

## GUIDED MEDITATION: RELEASE AND RE-CENTER

**INSTRUCTIONS:** To complete this exercise, you will need about 20 minutes of quiet, uninterrupted time for yourself. When you are ready, begin by noting your mental and emotional state before listening to the guided meditation in the space provided below. Then, listen to the **'Release and Re-Center' Meditation** found through the link in your **Week Two Email**.

Afterward, without rushing, give yourself a few minutes to check in with your body and then continue with your reflections.

### GUIDED MEDITATION: RELEASE AND RE-CENTER

BEFORE I FELT...

AFTER I FELT...



TIME OF DAY

REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS

**Next Steps:** Take some time before the start of the next week to reflect on the week's experiences in Worksheet 13 on the next page.



# WORKSHEET 13

END OF THE WEEK REFLECTIONS

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Allow yourself some time to reflect on your journey so far. What has stood out for you this week? What was challenging and what came easily? What would you like to experience more of? Try not to edit yourself as you write. Allow your mind and your pen to write freely.

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# NOTES

THERE ARE NO RULES HERE - JUST YOU AND THE PAGE!



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