A PRACTICAL GUIDE

More Joy, Starting Today

Nine simple ways to notice the good, find wonder in ordinary days and share your thanks.



www.forwardstepsblog.com

Joy isn't somewhere else.
It's hiding in plain sight.

You don't need more stuff to feel it. You need to notice what's already here.



EXPERIENCES BEAT THINGS

57%

of Americans said an experience they bought made them happier than a thing they bought. Only 34% said the thing.

Van Boven & Gilovich, JPSP, 2003

GRATITUDE ADDS UP

10 weeks

of listing what they were grateful for once a week, and people felt better about their lives than those who listed hassles

Emmons & McCullough, JPSP, 2003

WONDER IS CLOSE BY

15 min

weekly awe walks for eight weeks brought more joy on the walks than ordinary walks did, in a study of older adults

Sturm et al., Emotion, 2022

HOW THIS GUIDE WORKS

Three parts, nine ideas

PART 1

1

Count the good

Three good things, a gratitude jar, hard day

PART 2

2

Notice the wonder

Awe walks, fewer screens, a wonder journal.

PART 3

3

Share and create

Say thanks, choose moments, make meaning.



1

Count the good

Train your eye to spot what's already going right.



5:00

IDEA 1 · COUNT THE GOOD

Three joys

Tonight, write down three things that made you feel good today, and why. Keep it up for a week and see what you start to notice.

TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ Small counts: a smile, a good lunch, a kind text.
- ✓ Keep a notebook by your bed so it's easy.

GOOD THING	WHY IT MATTERED
Porch coffee	→ A quiet start
Sam's text	→ Felt remembered
Lunch walk	→ Sun on my face





Today's win



A favorite place



Someone I love



Call a friend



A small comfort



A happy memory

IDEA 2 · COUNT THE GOOD

A gratitude jar

Write gratitude prompts on slips of paper and drop them in a jar. On a heavy day, pull one out and answer it.

TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ Mix memories with actions, like calling a friend.
- ✓ Keep the jar where you'll see it every day.

IDEA 3 · COUNT THE GOOD

Find the good in hard days

Tough times come to everyone. Gratitude doesn't deny them. It helps you spot what still went right and what you're learning.

INSTEAD OF



Asking why this always happens to you

TRY



Asking what still went right, and what this can teach you

TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ Ask: what's one thing that went okay today?
- ✓ Remember a hard time you already got through.

2

Notice the wonder



Bring back the curiosity you had as a kid.

10

minute awe walk



Spot five things you've never noticed before.

IDEA 4 · NOTICE THE WONDER

Try an awe walk

Head outside with one goal: find five things you've never noticed before. A new sound, a shadow, the color of a flower.

TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ Leave your headphones at home.
- ✓ Walk a familiar route and look up.

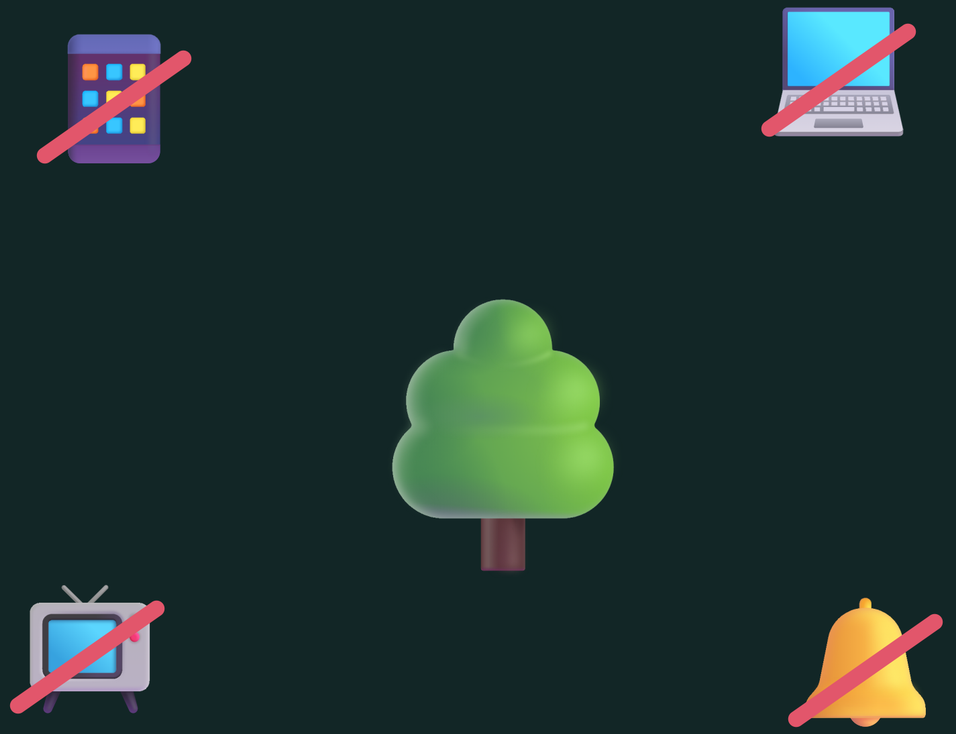
IDEA 5 · NOTICE THE WONDER

Screens down, eyes up

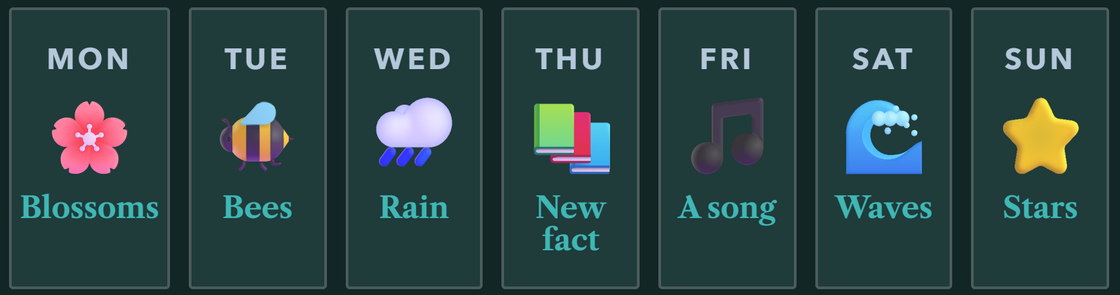
Too much screen time dulls your senses. Set a few screen-free times each day so you can notice the small wonders around you.

TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ Try a phone-free first hour of the day.
- ✓ Swap one scroll for a look out the window.



Wonder needs your attention.



One small amazement a day.

IDEA 6 · NOTICE THE WONDER

Note one wonder a day

Each day, write down one thing that amazed or delighted you. Over time it becomes proof that magic lives in ordinary days.

TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ One line is plenty.
- ✓ Read it back on a gray day.



3

Share and create



Joy grows when you give it away and build it.

IDEA 7 · SHARE AND CREATE

Send a thank-you

Think of someone who made a difference to you. Write them a short note saying what they did and what it meant. Then send it.

TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ Be specific about what they did.
- ✓ A text works. A handwritten card is even better.

> **That thank-you you keep meaning to send? Today is the day.**

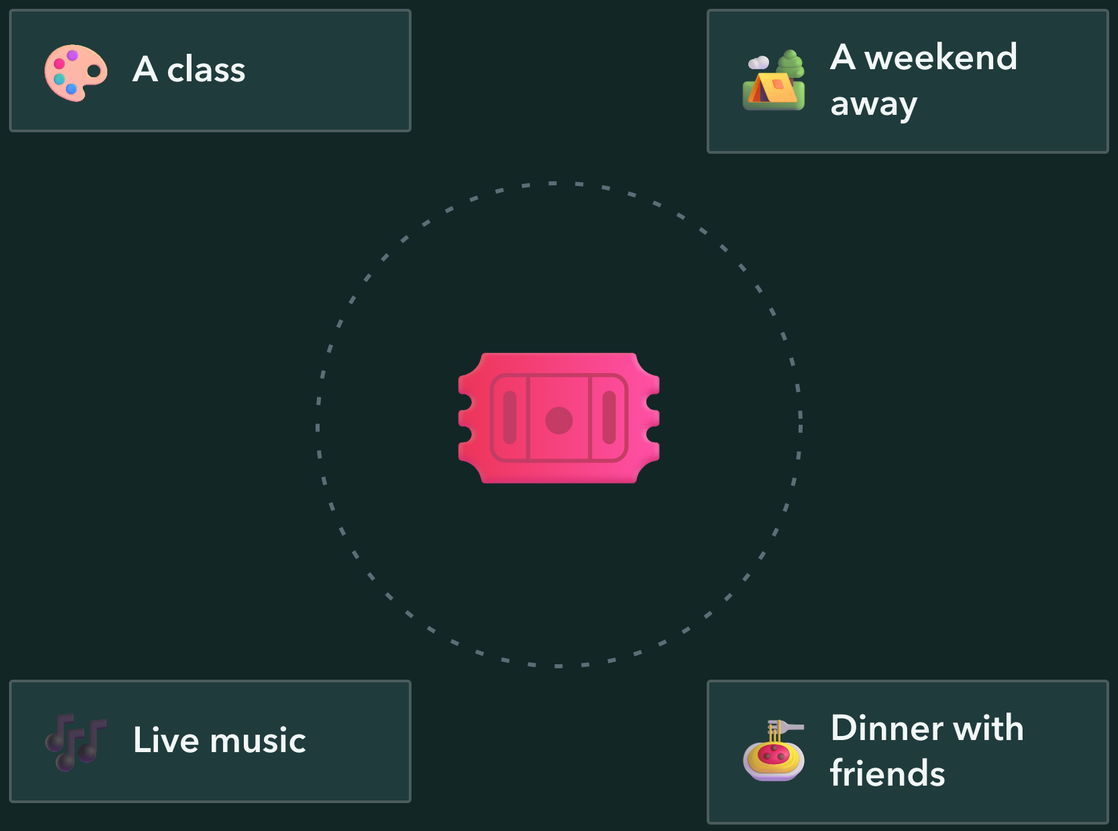


WHY IT WORKS

4

experiments found people sending thank-you letters underestimated how surprised and positive the person would feel

Kumar & Epley, Psychological Science, 2018



Spend on moments, not more things.

IDEA 8 · SHARE AND CREATE

Choose moments over stuff

A new gadget feels great for a while. Shared experiences, hobbies and learning tend to bring joy you remember for years.

TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ Plan one small outing this month.
- ✓ Gift an experience instead of an object.

IDEA 9 · SHARE AND CREATE

Create meaning

Meaning isn't found like buried treasure. You make it. Start something that reflects what you care about most.

TRY IT TODAY

- ✓ Look at your values for ideas.
- ✓ Small projects count: a garden, a club, a gift.

1. 💭 Name a value that matters to you
2. 🛠️ Pick a project that reflects it
3. 🚀 Take the first small step this week



YOUR PLAN

Pick two to start today

- Write three good things tonight
- Find one thing that went right
- Have one screen-free hour
- Send one thank-you note
- Start a project you care about
- Start a gratitude jar
- Take a 10-minute awe walk
- Start a wonder journal
- Plan a small outing



BONUS

Your 7-day joy log

Print this page and fill it in each evening. One line per box is plenty.

DAY	THREE GOOD THINGS	WHAT AMAZED ME	WHO I THANKED
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			



IMPORTANT

When to get extra support

- Low days have stretched into weeks and nothing seems to lift them
- Your sleep, appetite or energy have changed a lot
- You're pulling away from people and things you usually enjoy
- Talk to your doctor, a counselor or someone you trust

Gratitude and joy practices support everyday wellbeing. They don't replace care when you need it.

This guide is general information, not medical advice.



YOUR NEXT STEP

Start today with *one good thing.*

Pick the idea that feels easiest, try it today, and notice how your day looks by tonight.

Choose your first idea now



SOURCES

The research behind this guide

Van Boven L, Gilovich T. To do or to have? That is the question. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2003.

Emmons RA, McCullough ME. Counting blessings versus burdens. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2003.

Sturm VE et al. Big smile, small self: Awe walks promote prosocial positive emotions in older adults. Emotion, 2022 (online 2020).

Kumar A, Epley N. Undervaluing gratitude: Expressers misunderstand the consequences of showing appreciation. Psychological Science, 2018.

