



30 Days of

JOY

How to Rewire your
Brain for Happiness

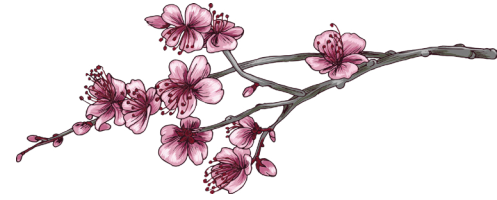
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Introduction: Welcome to la Dolce Vita

*Research has shown that the best way to be happy
is to make each day happy.*

—Deepak Chopra



The Italians call it *la dolce vita*—the sweet life. Do feelings of happiness and joy just happen? Do we experience them only when we're on vacation? Or can we create them again and again, whenever and wherever we want?

What if happiness and joy don't come easily to you—or you find it difficult to experience those qualities at present? Is there anything you can do to find and enhance joy, happiness, and love in your life so that you experience these emotions more frequently?

The truth is that there is tremendous joy, happiness, and love around you all the time. You already have all the answers. Guided journaling will help you access that joy, along with the innate wisdom that is already yours.

I know from my own experience that happiness is not always easy to attain, but I believe it is always a choice. As Abraham Lincoln said, “Folks are usually about as happy as they make up their minds to be.”

I believe that you can greatly affect the amount of joy you experience day by day, month by month, and year by year, but it begins with you. What would your life be like if attaining love and happiness was your number-one priority? What would the world be like if more people made joy and love a priority in their lives?

As you learned in Part One, your subconscious is always on guard, hardwired for defense and vigilance. If you want more happiness in your life, you must develop new neural pathways in the brain by consciously choosing joy again and again.



Your *30 Days of Joy* journal will guide you through structured practices and metacognition exercises designed to help you make joy and positivity a natural part of your life. Since “neurons that fire together, wire together,” you will relate your joys to the sights, smells, sounds, and memories of your life so that you can rebuild and strengthen your brain’s neural pathways and create joy again and again. You can rewire your brain for happiness even during stressful times.

Your *30 Days of Joy* is a journey that takes you higher and higher into joy. Many readers have reported that the more energy they put into the exercises, the more benefit they experience. Just 15 minutes a day, however, can lead to a marked increase in both your happiness levels and positive experiences.

Approaching the daily exercises with an attitude of exploration and experimentation will help pave a path away from guilt, fear, must-dos, and shoulds—and toward a life that is lighter and more aligned with the way you want to live.

You’ve been dating joy on and off for a while now. Sometimes you feel close and connected, and at other times it feels like a far-off stranger. If you want it to become your partner for life, then it’s time to step up and make it your number-one priority. It’s time to let joy in, big time.

A vow is a sacred promise. If you want to make the most of this book and this experience, I encourage you to create a “joy vow” for yourself. A really good ambitious vow might be something like this:

I vow to be better at looking for and finding all the good in my life. For the next 30 days, I will look for good in all areas of my life, including my body, my relationships, and my finances. I will appreciate the joys that are already all around me and I will look for opportunities to create new ones. With an open mind and an open heart, I look forward to the activities in this book. I am excited to see the beautiful experiences that are coming my way.



Q. What is your joy vow for the next 30 days? What commitment are you willing to make? Write your vow below and after you do so, be sure to sign your name.

For the next 30 days, I will:

A:

Now that you've made your joy vow, you need a "joy token"—something that represents your commitment. This will be your reminder, every day, that joy is a top priority. This token can be anything—a polished stone, a candle that you light, or maybe an inspirational or funny coffee cup that you use each morning.

Think about all the objects available to you, and choose the one that speaks to you the most—something that makes you smile and makes you think of joy. This will be your joy token, and it will remind you that for the next 30 days you will make joy a priority.

Q: My joy token is:

A:

Q: It reminds me of joy by:

A:

Have fun with these activities and approach them with a sincere heart. You are about to learn some wonderful things about yourself.

You're all set, so let's get started! I am so excited for the joy journey ahead of you!



Day 1: Simple Joys

*If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you
develop the habit in little matters.*

—Colin Powell

There are hundreds of ways to experience joy each day, if we would only pay attention and let them in. Today, I want you to focus on the simple joys in your life, like that first cup of coffee in the morning or how good it feels to step into a hot shower.

Thinking about your day, list some little things that bring you a spark of joy. And as you go through your day, pause for a moment each time you come across a simple joy and let it fill you up with love and happiness. Ahhh . . . here's to life's simple pleasures!

My simple joys are:



Day 2: Past Joys

Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive.

—Howard Thurman

What makes you feel alive? Today, I want you to think back on your life and recall an event that made you feel really alive. How did you feel? What happened that brought on this “alive” feeling? Is this an experience that you would like to have again? If so, what could you do to experience it again?

I felt really “alive” when:

This experience happened because:

I think I could experience that feeling again if I:



Day 3: Current Joys

Find joy in everything you do. Every job, relationship, home—it's your responsibility to love it, or change it.

—Chuck Palahniuk

We treat happiness as if it is something that happened to us—something that is out of our control. But happiness is a choice, and if I asked you, “Could you be happy for the next five minutes?” you would probably answer, “Yes.” What about the next 60 minutes? Could you be happy for the next hour? For a day? Of course you could! Because happiness and joy come from inside us.

Don't believe me? I can understand why you might have doubts. Again, for most people happiness is a response, not a choice. Something good happens and you feel good. Something bad happens and you feel bad. What if you could train yourself to see the good in everything—even sickness or stress or poverty?

Wouldn't your life be richer if you could experience happiness, love, and joy on a daily basis? There is so much beauty all around you. You just have to train yourself to see it and experience it.

Let's start with the basics: the joys you already know about. Looking at your day, what are some of the things that bring you joy? Write them down—everything from simple pleasures to heart-swelling happiness.

Some of the joys I currently experience in my life include:

My heart swells with happiness when I:



Day 4: Future Joys

Life must be lived as play.

—Plato

When you anticipate joyful events, you get to experience them twice—once in your mind and once in reality. Today I want you to jump fully into this two-for-one effect and write down the future joys you look forward to.

Notice how just thinking about the joys to come makes you feel good in the now? For the next few minutes, take some relaxing deep breaths, do some positive visualizing, and write about what you look forward to enjoying today. Do you have any fun events coming up in the next couple of weeks?

Now think further into the future. In a perfect world, if there were no chance of failure, what would you really enjoy experiencing? Describe these events and how they make you feel.

Today, I look forward to:

In the future, I would really enjoy:

After you have written down your thoughts, go back and underline the words that describe how these events make you feel. For example, when I did this exercise and underlined the adjectives that I'd used, I learned that I value things like freedom, peace, and connecting.



What did you underline? What did you learn about yourself? What words are synonymous with joy for you?

I learned that I value:

Words that I find synonymous with joy include:



Day 5: Think Up a Big, Big Goal

Be really whole and all things will come to you.

—Lao Tzu

I recently had a very powerful experience. I was invited to participate in a free online program called “Joy Challenge.” The host, a generous and kind woman named Amina Makhdoom, asked participants to come up with a goal—something they really wanted—and then she asked them to just relax and let that goal come to them.

As I mentioned in Part One, more than anything else, my Joy Challenge was to see my son thriving and enjoying good health and happiness.

So my big, big goal was for my son’s health. But after I set that goal, I was miserable. All I could see around me were examples of how sick he was and how that goal was not coming true. I was trying to be happy, but my focus had been on my son’s illness for so long that illness was all I could see.

Finally, I decided to just let go. No more spending hours every day scouring the internet for cures. I decided to have faith and to see what would happen if I stopped pushing so hard and just let the goal come to me.

Two weeks later, the doctor said that the alternative treatments we had been trying were not working and that it was time to try a serious medicine. I had tears in my eyes because we had tried to avoid this medicine because there was the possibility that it would lead to early onset Alzheimer’s. I felt like we had failed. My son didn’t care what he took. He just wanted the pain to stop, even if it hurt him down the road and even if it was highly addictive.

. It was time for me to let go of my fear of what might happen. So I asked myself, “If joy were my priority, how would I feel about this medicine?”



The answer, of course, was that I would feel light about it. I would relax and know that no matter what happened, we would be OK. And you know what? The new medicine was a miracle! It worked. It was just what my son needed and we never would have been open to trying it if we had not let go of our fears and opened our eyes to new possibilities.

I want you to have this kind of experience, too. I want you to think of something you really want and then just relax and let that something come to you. Sometimes we set a goal and then we hold too tightly to the steering wheel, trying to control how the goal is received. I want you to relax and open yourself up to the many ways that your dream can come to you.

Here is an activity you can do to help determine what your goal might be: Sit in a quiet place, with your eyes closed. Take 10 deep breaths. Tell your heart and your mind that you are seeking wisdom and clarity. Ask your wise inner self, “What is my big, big goal?”

Relax and continue to breathe. When you have the answer, open your eyes and write down your goal on the lines below.

My big, big goal is:

If you want, you can light a candle and think of your goal. Then, after a moment or three, blow the candle out and send your goal on its way—along with the smoke! And be prepared for magic to happen!

Next, forget all about that goal. You are going to practice the art of effortless receiving. For the next 25 days, your only job is to stay in joy. You are going to “get your happy on” and let that beautiful, wonderful goal come to you with no stress, worry, or effort on your part.

Just write down your goal and let it go.



Day 6: Your Joy Bucket List

*The real magic lies not in seeing new landscapes,
but in having new eyes.*

—Marcel Proust

You have a lot of wonderful years ahead of you. How do you want to spend them? Can you think of 30 goals that you would like to achieve in your lifetime? (*You may want to mark this page so that you can come back to it again and again.*)

I wrote my list when I was in my twenties. On it I wrote that I wanted to write a book. Later, in my thirties, a publisher asked me if I wanted to write a book for them. I was about to turn the offer down (explaining that I just didn't have the time), when a good friend of mine said, "But, isn't writing a book on your bucket list?" She was right! I had forgotten all about it. So I cleared my schedule and wrote that book; it became one of the best experiences in my life.

What will you put on your bucket list? Do you want to learn to play a musical instrument, learn a foreign language, go to the Galápagos Islands, run a marathon? Every year, I pick something from my bucket list and make it a priority. (Be glad you weren't around the year I tried to learn to play the guitar! It was dreadful.)

Write your list now while you have a clear and joyful vision of what you want your future to look like, because sometimes when we are "in the weeds" and focused on the details of our busy daily lives, we forget what our big picture hopes are.

What is on your joy bucket list?



I want to see:

I want to do:

I want to have:

I want to be:

I want to learn:



Day 7: If Joy Were Your Number-One Priority

When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better too.

—Paulo Coelho

One day I had a crazy idea: “I wonder what my life would be like if joy were my number-one priority?” I liked the idea, but I feared that focusing on my joy would make me a selfish person.

Still, I had made a vow to cultivate more joy in my life so I decided to try it for just one day. And do you know what happened? I discovered that happiness is infectious. I was so happy that day that it spread to those around me and they became happier too.

What is your number-one priority is for your life right now—survival, efficiency, hard work? Those are very respectable priorities. But what if you could achieve what you want to and go where you want to with more ease and more smiles? What would your life be like if you made joy, love, and happiness your top priorities? I urge you to give it a try today and see what happens.

Q: Looking at your schedule for the day, if joy were your number-one priority, would you keep your schedule as it is, or would you make any changes? Write your thoughts here.

Q: If happiness were your number-one priority, how would you spend your precious time today?

Q: If love were your number-one priority, what would your day be like? How would you “be”? Would you change the words you normally use? Would you communicate differently with family and close friends, and if so, how?



Day 8: What Phase of Life Are You In?

The minute you stop improving yourself is the minute your life becomes stale. Never stop challenging yourself to become the best you can be.

—Mo Seetubtim

We pick up a lot of messages from our culture about how we should act and who we should be. Twenty-year-olds are expected to act one way and fifty-year-olds another. But who says that society's cultural norms are correct or right for you?

Today, I encourage you to take a look at what society expects you to be, have, or do at your age, then decide for yourself what you will keep and what you will let go of.

For your age, how are you expected to act?

Are these expectations helpful or not helpful?

Does your culture have gender roles that you are expected to follow? What are some of them?

Which expectations bring you joy and which would you like to let go?



What phase of life are you in?

How can you enjoy this time of your life to the fullest?

What expectations do you have for yourself?



Day 9: *What Was Your “Best Thing” Today?*

*Surround yourself with the dreamers and doers,
the believers and thinkers, but most of all,
surround yourself with those who see the greatness
within you, even when you don't see it yourself.*

—Edmund Lee

I have a “joy booster” practice that I learned from one of my favorite books: *The Magic*, by Rhonda Byrne (the author who created *The Secret*.) I've been doing it for years and it really helps me fall asleep with a full and grateful heart.

Find a small object, like a polished stone, that fits in your hand. Before you go to bed each night, hold this object and think back on all of the wonderful things that happened during the day. (*My friend Pat holds a small angel. I hold a small polished heart.*) Ask yourself, *What was the best part of my day?*

The beauty of this activity is that to choose your favorite or “best” memory, you get to relive all of the other good things that happened to you that day. Holding something in your hand while you relive your joys engages your sense of touch and makes the experience more meaningful.

What will you hold in your hand each evening?

I will hold:



My favorite part of the day today was when I:

It was my favorite part because:

I was able to have this experience because:



Day 10: What Are You Feeling Right Now?

*Time does not heal everything but
acceptance will heal everything.*

—Buddha

What do you do when joy seems a bit harder to find? Today, I want you to “get in touch” with your feelings. We live in a society where feelings are often undervalued. People say things like, “You’re too sensitive.” But today I want you to be sensitive. Don’t just sweep your feelings under the rug; think of them as carriers of important information.

As you go through the day, ask yourself frequently, “What am I feeling right now?” Do you notice any patterns? Do you feel down or have more negative feelings when you’re hungry or when you are tired?

What have your feelings taught you today?



Day 11: Beware of ANTs

The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts: Therefore, guard accordingly, and take care that you entertain no notions unsuitable to virtue and reasonable nature.

—Marcus Aurelius

Yesterday you practiced noticing your feelings and learning from them. Today, I want you to pay attention to ANTs that you might be having. As we learned in Part One, feelings can be extremely helpful as carriers of information, but ANTs, for the most part, are damaging. And they are sneaky. They enter undetected, burrow in, and make you feel bad for no reason. ANTs are “joy killers.”

It will be much easier to stay in joy if you train yourself to notice ANTs and send them on their way before you internalize them. A psychiatrist I know says that people could save themselves years of therapy just by becoming aware of their ANTs.

You’ll know that an ANT is trying to burrow into your psyche because you will suddenly feel down for no reason. When this happens, stop and ask yourself, “What was I just thinking?” Write these thoughts down.

ANTs that come up for me include:



Day 12: Inspiration vs. Perspiration

The best thing to do when you find yourself in a hurting or vulnerable place is to surround yourself with the strongest, finest, most positive people you know.

—Kristin Armstrong

Remember back on Day 5 when I asked you to write down a big goal and then just forget about it? How are you doing with that? Have you been able to just let it go? Or is it still on your mind?

For some people, setting a goal can trigger a cascade of negative thoughts. Let's say, for example, that you set a goal to lose weight. Every day after that you think to yourself, *Still fat! Still fat! Still fat!* Or let's say you set a goal to have more money. Instead of joyfully anticipating more money coming in, your dominant thought is, *Still poor! Still poor! Not enough!*

We live in a culture that honors hard work and perspiration. This guided journal is designed to show you a different perspective—that goals can be achieved with ease and joy.

For many, goal-setting is like picking out a big tree in the forest and then chopping at it until and the tree falls down. This is the “perspiration” method. But what if you could see your goal as an art project—as an outlet for your creativity? What if, instead of chopping down a tree, you planted one, and then another?

As you go through this book, I want you to let go of your fears and impatience and let that goal come to you. If you feel inspired to move toward achieving your goal in some way, then follow that prompt. Inspiration feels like a loving tap on the shoulder, saying: “Do this. It will feel good.”

Your only job along the way is to stay in joy. From this elevated position you will have a better feel for what to do and the types of actions to take.

How have you have been feeling about your goal?



When I think about my goal, I feel:

If you experience any negative emotions around your goal, ask yourself what you can do to help yourself feel better.

I think I will feel better and be more able to let that goal come to me if I

If you feel good about your goal, what are you doing that works well?

Here are the things that are working really well for me. They include:

Now visualize that you have achieved your goal. How do you feel? What will you do? Concentrate on your positive feelings.

When I achieve my goal, I will feel ...

... and I will do ...



Day 13: Decide Ahead of Time

We are the creators of our own experience. Remembering this and living our lives from this perspective empowers us.

—Mike Robbins

You can decide ahead of time how you are going to feel about something. This joy booster works really well when you feel overwhelmed. It slows you down and helps you identify the kind of experience you want to have, moment by moment. It reminds you that you create your life experience.

If you feel constantly overwhelmed, break your day into small moments and decide ahead of time not just what you are going to do, but how you will feel about it.

Let's say you are getting in the car to go somewhere. Before you start the car, pause and say to yourself, "I am going to have a safe and enjoyable drive and arrive on time." Or if you have household chores to do say to yourself, "Now I'm going to feel good doing the dishes. Then I'm going to relax and watch TV for an hour." Or "Now I'm going to enjoy a hot shower."

Today, slow down, go moment by moment, and decide ahead of time what kind of experience you are going to have. Set your intention for that experience. This is one of the best techniques I know to counter the sensation of being overwhelmed. Try it and see what happens for you!

How did this technique work for you?

What kinds of adjectives did you use most often (enjoyable, relaxing, leisurely, fun, etc.)?



Day 14: Which Feels Lighter?

There are moments when troubles enter our lives and we can do nothing to avoid them. But they are there for a reason. Only when we have overcome them will we understand why they were there.

—Paulo Coelho

Sometimes, happiness and joy feel so far away that they don't even seem like possibilities.

According to cognitive neuroscientists, only 5% of our brain activity—our choices, our actions, and our emotions—comes from our conscious mind. The other 95% is controlled by our subconscious.

The mindfulness activities that you have been doing these past two weeks have been giving your subconscious mind “directions” about what you enjoy and what you want more of.

So when life is going well and you are feeling great, you can ask yourself, *Which choice makes me happy?* or *Which choice will bring me more joy?*

But if you're feeling unhappy, low, or depressed, trust your subconscious to make choices for you. If joy seems impossible, choose whatever feels “lighter”—a little bit easier, a little bit better.

Here is an example of how this might play out. Let's say you're faced with the choice of whether or not to exercise. You ask yourself, “Which feels lighter, exercising or not exercising?” The feeling is very subtle, but in your mind the idea of exercising feels a little “lighter,” a little better, than the idea of not exercising. So you listen to your subconscious and you go exercise.

Or let's say you're at breakfast and you have a choice between eggs or cereal. You ask yourself, “Which feels lighter, the eggs or the cereal?” Your subconscious mind directs you to the cereal by making that choice feel a little bit better. So you trust your subconscious and you enjoy the cereal.



By continuing to choose options that feel lighter throughout the day, your happiness level goes higher and higher.

When you have choices to make today, pause and ask yourself, *Which feels lighter?* At the end of the day, write down what you learned from this activity.

Did this game help you to feel happier?

This activity helped me and I felt:



Day 15: Where Do You Need More Joy?

In life, the things that go wrong are often the very things that lead to other things going right.

—Arianna Huffington

Is there an area of your life that doesn't feel as joyful as you would like? Now that you've been paying attention to joy, have you noticed any areas of your life that bring your joy level down? Is there a kind, loving, and joyful way to fix that?

Write down where you would like more joy in your life and how you can lovingly achieve this.

The following things bring my joy level down:

I think I can fix this by:



Day 16: It's OK, I Love Myself Anyway

Learning to accept yourself is more important than making other people accept you. It's how you see yourself that really matters.

—Anonymous

Insecurity is a joy killer. It feels so unpleasant to doubt yourself, look for faults, or feel that you are not enough. Today you are going to create some positive affirmations for yourself.

One of the best joy habits you can have is to accept yourself as you are right now. Accept your body the way it is. Accept your finances. Accept the choices you've made. And accept any mistakes you also might have made. By enjoying who and where you are right now, you practically guarantee that you will be happy in the future, because love, acceptance, and gratitude have become your daily habits.

Have you ever felt that no matter what your weight was, no matter how much money you had, and no matter what you did, it just wasn't good enough? Put a stop to that habit right now. Your new habit is, "I love myself and I love my life just as it is right now." This way, when you do have "more," you know you will enjoy it. That's your habit. And when you do reach that magical, "perfect" state, you know you will enjoy that too. Because enjoying and appreciating your "now" is your habit. So let's start this new, wonderful way of being right now.

For today's activity, think of those areas in your life where you tend to criticize yourself and write out some new affirmations. Start each sentence with, "Even though ..." and end the sentence with, "... I love and accept myself."

Even though ...

... I love and accept myself, just as I am right now.



Day 17: Random Acts of Kindness

*Do the things that inspire us so we can inspire other people
to do the things that inspire them.*

—Scott Dinsmore

Anytime you want to feel a huge surge of joy, do a random act of kindness. I try to do this whenever there is really bad news in the media, because that's when people feel particularly depressed and hopeless—and hopeless is not a good place to be. It's hard to make changes in the world when people feel that there is nothing they can do to make a difference.

One day, I decided to really go for it and to do a big random act of kindness. I was going to pay for everything in a stranger's shopping cart! As soon as I decided to do this, the ANTs came marching in. "You can't afford this!" "The person will think you're crazy!" "What if you embarrass yourself?" But one of my personal rules is that "Fear doesn't make my decisions," so I headed over to Target.

I looked over the cashier lines and chose a cart that I thought I could afford. I went up to the cashier, gave her my credit card, and whispered to her that I wanted to do a random act of kindness: I wanted to surprise the next person in line by paying for everything in her cart.

The cashier smiled and put my credit card next to the cash register. When the next person in line tried to pay, the cashier winked and told her that a stranger was doing random acts of kindness, had chosen her, and would be paying for everything in her cart. The woman was so shocked and so happy that she became a bit teary. She kept saying, "Thank you, thank you!" After the woman left, I went up to collect my credit card and the cashier gave me a hug. It felt so good. All three of us had benefitted deeply from a simple kind act.

Just like dropping a pebble in a pond, random acts of kindness send ripples of kindness and love into the world. The person who receives your kindness passes their happiness on to others. They have just had personal confirmation that good does in fact exist in the world.



Get out of your comfort zone and do a good deed for a stranger. Buy someone's coffee or buy dessert for the table next to you. This makes such a difference in someone's day. When you are on the receiving end of a kind act like this, you stand a little taller and your heart expands. Someone thinks that you matter and that you are worthy of love and generosity. This is big stuff.

Today, think creatively and make a list of random acts of kindness that you would enjoy doing for others. The next time there is bad news in the media, head on out and do a good deed. It makes a difference.

For my random acts, I would like to:



Day 18: Think of Someone Who Annoys You

Gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions. The more you express gratitude for what you have, the more likely you will have even more to express gratitude for.

—Zig Ziglar

When we're angry or annoyed with someone, our magnificent brain goes into overdrive to prove how right we are. Suddenly, we find ourselves thinking about everything that person has done wrong and we no longer see the good in them. If you can bring your brain back to a centered place, you'll have a clearer view of the situation.

Whenever you feel angry or annoyed with someone, pause and make yourself come up with a mental list of 10 things about that person for which you are grateful. For example:

- I am grateful to Julie for how good she is with my kids.
- I am grateful to Julie for that time she brought me soup when I was sick.
- I am grateful to Julie for being my friend for so long.

Don't stop until you have listed 10 things. This can be difficult, but grab a pen and go deep. You will feel so much better and you will make better decisions from this place of greater balance and peace.

I am grateful to _____ for:

1.

2.

3.



4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.



Day 19: Focus on What You Have

*If you look at what you have in life,
you'll always have more.*

*If you look at what you don't have in life,
you'll never have enough.*

—Oprah Winfrey

When we focus on lack, no matter how much we have, we feel we never have enough. One of the best joy habits you can develop is to focus on all the things in your life that make you happy—not on the things you don't have.

Sometimes we are so busy noticing the things we lack that we fail to realize how good we really have it. I have broken this down so that you can look at the different areas of your life one at a time.

Thinking about your body, what parts are you really grateful for?

What part of your body is your favorite?

Looking around your home, list all the things about it that you really love.

What part of it is your favorite area? Why? How did that come to be?



Regarding your clothing, if joy were your number-one priority, what would you wear today?

What are your favorite articles of clothing?

Why are they your favorites? Do you need to go shopping?

Now list some of the things that you are grateful to have, and which you would enjoy having even more of.

I enjoy having _____ and I would appreciate having more of it/them because _____.

List as many things as you can.



Day 20: Your Joy Hobbies

Balance, peace, and joy are the fruit of a successful life. It starts with recognizing your talents and finding ways to serve others by using them.

—Thomas Kinkade

Do you have hobbies that bring you joy? I have never been much of a hobby person, but I would like to try flower arranging. I think flowers are so beautiful. I would love to create arrangements for my friends' birthdays, and make table arrangements for the holidays. I don't know how to do any of this yet, but learning how to do flower arranging is definitely on my joy wish list.

What about you? Do you have hobbies that you enjoy? How do you feel when you spend time on them? In what ways do they bring joy into your life and into the lives of others? What about a new hobby? Is there something you have been wanting to try? Why do you want to try it?

What are your hobbies and how do they bring you joy?

Are there new hobbies that you would like to try? If so, name them here.

How could your hobby bring joy to others?



Day 21: Your Top 10 Desires

You are confined only by the walls you build yourself.

—Andrew Murphy

Today, I want you to write down your top 10 desires as if they have already happened. Describe each in detail. Many of my top 10 desires have already come true!

I kept my top 10 list in my wallet; whenever I thought about it, I would take it out and visualize each thing on it as if it had already come true. This was an especially good use of my time when I was standing in line at the post office, for instance, or stuck in a traffic jam somewhere.

I had been diagnosed with macular degeneration, so on my “top 10” list I wrote: “Thank you for my healthy eyes. The macular degeneration is gone and my eyes are now healthy. It feels so good not to have to worry about my eyesight. Thank you for my healthy eyes and healthy vision.” After six months, I went to an eye specialist and had my eyes thoroughly examined. The doctor found no sign of macular degeneration.

I also wanted to sell my business, so I wrote on my list, “Thank you for bringing me the perfect buyer for my business. I am so happy and the buyer is so happy. The dollar amount was just what I wanted and the sale went through smoothly. Thank you so much for helping me sell my business and for all the money you have sent to me in my life. I appreciate and enjoy it so very much.” This past year, I sold my business to a buyer that I really respect and the deal went through smoothly and joyfully.

What will you put on your list? What are your top 10 desires? Visualize the entries on your list again and again as if they have already come true. Focus on how good you feel when you contemplate them.

Take some time with this exercise and do some deep thinking about what you really want. For many people, this is hard work. We live in a society that tells us what we must do and what we should do. But when is the last time anyone asked what you want to do?



I encourage you to write your desires down in past tense. If you write them in future tense, you put yourself under pressure to achieve them. If you write them in past tense, as if they have already happened, you relax, you start to believe, you smile, and you let that experience come to you.

With gratitude in your heart, think about what you really want and describe it as though it has already happened. Begin each desire with the words, “*Thank you for ...*”

1.

2.

3.



Day 22: Joy Walks

*In every walk with nature one receives
far more than he seeks.*

-John Muir

One of the best joy boosters is also one of the easiest—and it's absolutely free. If you ever feel down or just want to feel happier, go for a walk. Moving your body while you listen to the birds sing or feel a breeze on your skin is some of the best medicine out there.

I love this activity. I feel good almost immediately. It works when I'm listening to the birds and noticing my surroundings and it works when I'm listening to music or an audiobook while I walk. It's being outside and moving that does the trick.

Today, take a walk and really pay attention to what you see, hear, smell, and feel. Let your senses relax and come alive.

What did you experience on your walk today?

Did your joy level increase? Describe how this felt.



Day 23: Photograph Your Joys

Focus on the positive in your life, for what you focus on increases.

—Anonymous

As you go through your day, pause and take photos of all the things that give you joy. When I did this exercise, for example, I took photos of my cup of morning chai, my swing in the back yard, and my sister arriving at the airport for a visit.

By photographing your joys, you get to experience that joy three times: once when you think about what you will photograph, again when you take the photo, and a third time when you look at the photo afterward. And if you share your photo with someone else, you will get to experience that joy a fourth time. What a wonderful and powerful way to celebrate the joys in your life—joys that are all around you and just waiting to be acknowledged!

What favorite things did you photograph today?



Day 24: Follow Your Joy Sparks

Trust yourself. Create the kind of self that you will be happy to live with all your life. Make the most of yourself by fanning the tiny, inner sparks of possibility into flames of achievement.

—Golda Meir

We often spend so much time doing what we “should” that we lose our joy for life. And when we lose joy we become automatons, moving robotically through our days and feeling barely alive.

I believe that we each have a purpose, but how do we discover it? How do we find that special path that is uniquely our own? For me, the answer is “joy sparks.” These moments occur when you think of or do something that aligns with who you really are.

Suddenly, in the midst of doing something, you will smile or feel happy. Pay attention to those moments and to what you were thinking about or doing right before you experienced the joy spark. It tells you that you are on the right path.

Have there been times in your life when you felt you were being guided by joy? Describe them here.

Have you ever chosen joy over practicality? What happened?

Let your joy sparks guide you today. Notice whenever you feel a spark of happiness, and let it guide you from one activity to another. At the end of the day, write down how this changed your day.



Day 25: I'm Proud of Myself For ...

Dare to love yourself as if you were a rainbow with gold at both ends.

—Author—Poet Aberjhani

Do you know how truly wonderful you are? Every day you do so many things that you can be proud of. Celebrate “you” today and list all the things about yourself that you’re proud of.

I'm proud of myself for:

I'm proud of the way I:



Day 26: Color Me Grateful

Happiness is not something you postpone for the future; it is something you design for the present.

—Jim Rohn

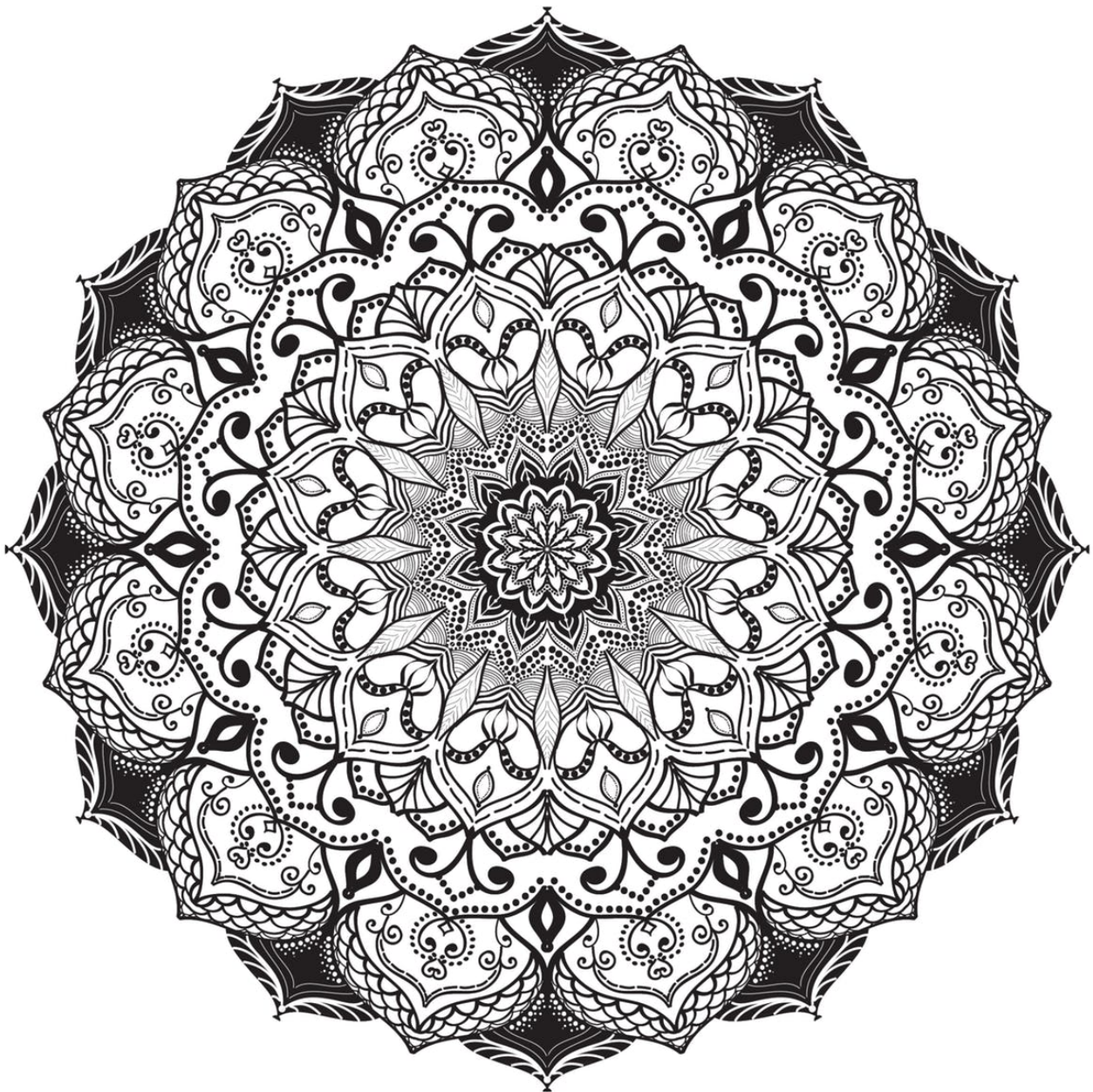


This is a mandala—a meditation device designed to guide you from an external focus to an internal focus. We will use it to amplify your feelings of gratitude, which will help you more fully enjoy your life.



Starting at the outside of the mandala, color in one section at a time. As you color in each respective section, think about something for which you are grateful, and dwell on this for the entire time you're coloring that section. Then, right before you lift your colored pencil, marker, or crayon from the page, reinforce your gratitude by saying "Thank you for _____
_____."

Continue coloring and notice how light and happy you feel. Notice how your distractions and preoccupations fade away and you begin to truly relax.





Day 27: Laughter

Laughter is an instant vacation.

—Milton Berle

Laughter is a wonderfully effective tool that helps keep you on an even keel. Today, surround yourself with jokes and comedies. Take time to look for things that make you laugh.

What did you find? Did you discover a source of laughter that you can come back to when you need a joy booster? Something that might help you if you are ever feeling sad or sick? Maybe it's a favorite book, movie, or person.

My go-to laugh-maker, for instance, is the TV show *Psych*. No matter how crabby I might be, this show cracks me up. I tune in when I'm feeling low or stressed, and if I can share it with others, better yet!

List some things that consistently make you laugh and when you need a joy booster, connect with it/them.



Day 28: I'm Getting So Much Done!

The three components of happiness are: something to do, something to love, and something to look forward to.

—Dr. Gordon Livingston

One of the benefits of being in joy is that you have less resistance—less “drag.” You flow more easily through your day and you get more done.

Have you noticed that you are being more productive these days?

Celebrate and list the things—big or small—that you have been able to cross off your to-do list.



Day 29: Your Joy Toolbox

Ego says, “Once everything falls into place, I’ll feel peace.”

Spirit says, “Find your peace, and then everything will fall into place.”

—Marianne Williamson

This book has introduced you to powerful techniques that you can use again and again to raise your happiness level. You have rewired your brain and developed strong neural pathways for joy. You now have the habit of looking for the good in your life on a daily basis, no matter the circumstances.

You’ve learned that happiness is a choice. It is not something that happens to you—it’s something you keep choosing again and again.

The questions below will help you recall your favorite joy activities. You may want to mark this page so that you can come back to it if you fall off the joy wagon, as we all do. These are your go-to “joy cures” that can help you get back on track.

When you are overwhelmed, what techniques get you back to clarity and peace?

When you are depressed and joy feels far away, what can you do to raise your spirits?

If you are going through a stressful situation, which technique works best to help you remain positive?



If you have a choice to make, what question can you ask yourself to help you figure out the path that would bring you the most joy, happiness, and love?

What are some of your favorite joy boosters?

What have you learned from this book about goal-setting and effortless receiving?

Do you have a nighttime routine that makes you feel grateful and happy? Journal about it here.

Do you have a favorite morning routine that helps you start your day with joy? Journal about it here.

What is the number-one thing that drops you out of joy and how can you avoid or change that?

What is the most helpful thing you've learned about yourself and your ability to experience joy?



Day 30: Write a Love Letter to Yourself!

I detach myself from preconceived outcomes and trust that all is well. Being myself allows the wholeness of my unique magnificence to draw me in those directions most beneficial to me and to all others. This is really the only thing I have to do. And within that framework, everything that's truly mine comes into my life effortlessly, in the most magical and unexpected ways imaginable, demonstrating every day the power and love of who I truly am.

—Anita Moorjani

When I found this wonderful quotation by Anita Moorjani (from her book *Dying to Be Me*) I read it again and again; I couldn't stop smiling as I did so. As you read these words, really take them into your heart.

Your assignment for today, our last day, is to write a love letter to yourself. Tell yourself how wonderful you are. Send yourself encouragement. Pass on your wisdom. You will know what to write. The words will flow through you and onto the paper.

It has been an honor and a privilege to be with you on this journey. I wish you so many good things! May your life be filled with beauty, love, and kindness and may you eternally be filled with joy!



Conclusion

It has been an honor and a pleasure to spend the past 30 days with you. I hope you enjoyed your guided journaling experience. Through my work as CEO of Journaling.com, I experiment with many different journaling styles, and guided journaling is probably my favorite.

Did you know that you can create your own guided journals? Simply get out your notebook or journal and begin to ask yourself questions.

- What am I feeling?
- Is there anything I need?
- What is the one thing I can do today that will make the biggest difference?
- What am I grateful for?
- What am I looking forward to today?
- What is my main focus today?
- What actions can I take today to help me achieve my goals?

The key to guided journaling is to slow down and to listen to yourself as if you were both therapist and client. Ask yourself clarifying questions and pay attention to your answers.

I hope this book is just the beginning of your joy journey. Don't forget that happiness is a choice. If you can choose to be happy for 15 minutes, you can be happy for a day. And if you can be happy for a day, you can make happiness, love, and joy a priority for this year and for next year.

Feel free to write me at any time and share your story. My email address is Rebecca@Journaling.com

I wish you all the best,

Rebecca Kochenderfer

Disclaimer

This book is not a substitute for medical or psychiatric care. Always consult a physician with questions about health matters, particularly with regard to physical and mental symptoms that may require professional diagnosis or attention.

