



Gratitude
&
GRIT

A JOURNAL FOR
GROWING RESILIENCE

VICKI ENNS

A project of the Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute (CTRI)

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the *Gratitude and Grit* journal. You may have picked this up for any number of reasons. A journal can be an amazing instrument for documenting our inner experiences, organizing our feelings and thoughts, understanding our emotions, and finding meaning in our daily lives.

The process of expressive writing or journaling has been found to be beneficial in many areas of health, including physical, emotional, and social wellness. My own tendency is to journal when I need to work something out, capture details about an experience that I hope to understand more about later, or work my way emotionally and intellectually to a stronger place. My hope is that this resource contributes in a positive way to your overall wellness.

Advice varies for what people should pay attention to for greater health and resilience in life. Common advice points to two diverging paths. One path encourages an internal process of slowing down, pausing, and becoming more accepting of what is already unfolding in our lives. A second path focuses on how we actively engage with the external world, emphasizing the need to identify goals, lean into challenges, make efficient lists, and push forward toward change.

What I have noticed in my own life is that by paying attention to both of these paths, an even stronger positive effect comes about. For me, the two qualities that best express this kind of interwoven relationship are *gratitude* and *grit*.

Gratitude invites us to move our intention inward. It means pausing our focus on achievements or the need to change and shifting our attention to the important things that are already in our lives and relationships.

Grit, on the other hand, helps us engage with the external challenges we face. It's the combination of strengths we draw upon to keep moving and lean in to tackle what might be challenging or feel negative in our

lives. Grit helps us get through setbacks and bring about positive change.

I have found that when I focus only on gratitude or solely on grit, I feel out of balance and like I am ignoring something important. As a result, I started to explore what would happen if I found a balanced way to nurture both.

For many years, I have actively cultivated several practices to attend to my own mental and emotional health and explore in my professional counseling work. I have read articles and books, attended trainings, meditated over hours and days, done many rounds with a punching bag, and engaged in my own counseling work. All of these have been helpful.

In the end, however, I have longed for a simpler structure, one that combines the power of both gratitude and grit. I have found that simultaneously paying attention to both creates a synergy that supports new growth and possibilities. We can benefit from the nurture and rest of gratitude while also strengthening the stamina and confidence from grit.

The good news is that both gratitude and grit are accessible to every person. We each have the raw ingredients of these qualities already in our inherited resilience, natural habits, and accumulated life experience. With some attention, reflection, and practice, we can build on what we already have within us and move toward greater well-being and resilience. It is possible to actively *grow* each of these and combine their benefits.

THE QUIET POWER OF GRATITUDE

Gratitude's strength can be found in times of quiet reflection. There is a growing body of research that highlights the benefits of *noticing what you are grateful for in life* (Watkins & Scheibe, 2018). It turns out that taking time to notice, name, and express gratitude has benefits in many areas:

- Reduced stress, depression, and sense of hopelessness
- Improved sleep and overall mood
- Increased sense of motivation and confidence in life
- Expanded sense of positive self-esteem
- Improved relationships and greater appreciation of others
- Deepened sense of spirituality
- Increased creativity and openness
- Increased hopefulness

When we cultivate an open outlook and take time to really notice, absorb, and express gratitude, we are deepening an important state in our mind and body. This positive effect ripples into other parts of our experience and into our relationships. However, one catch is that a sense of gratitude can be fleeting. Although it is readily accessible, it is easy to lose our focus on it, and our attention can quickly shift to what we find stressful. Our survival instinct pushes us to watch out for what worries us. Hence, problems we may be facing resurface and grab our attention.

Which brings me to the other quality we all need ... *grit*.

THE RUMBLING POWER OF GRIT

What do you rely on to get you through a tough day? What rumbles within you to overcome challenges? What behaviors, supports, or messages help you continue to show up and carry on? We all develop patterns in our ways of dealing with difficulties – whether this is how we think, collaborate, or sustain ourselves. One word for this quality is *grit*. This is the ability to keep getting up after we fall or fail, and it's one of the most important life skills that can increase our hope for new possibilities.

In her book, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, Angela Duckworth (2016) has been documenting the importance of this quality. She has found that grit is a more robust predictor of success and well-being than talent, skill, or academic achievement.

When we are able to tap into our grit, there are a variety of benefits:

- Increased ability to persevere
- Expanded ability to adapt to challenges
- Persistence to face our fears
- Growth in self-esteem and confidence
- Increased hopefulness
- Development of a growth mindset
- Increased likelihood of achieving positive change
- Long-term success and satisfaction

Each of us has a different set of qualities, beliefs, and habits that make up our overall grit, and we draw upon these to different degrees as we face life's challenges. There are things we can do to nurture our grit, allowing it to become even stronger. This includes things like knowing what passions

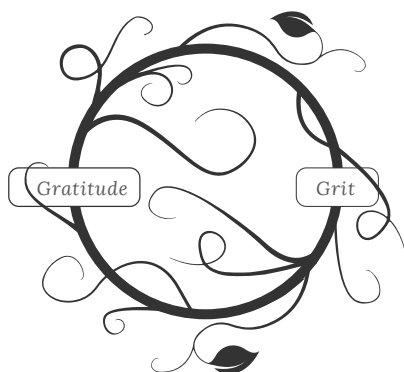
and values drive us and make us willing to wake up extra early to work on something or push ourselves out of our comfort zones. Willingness to practice, fail, and try again when something is important to us, or carrying a hopeful attitude that somehow things will work out in a positive way – these things also allow grit to grow. When we dig into our grit and explore how and why it matters to us, it can nurture a stronger sense of self and enhance our connections with others and our surroundings.

GROWING RESILIENCE THROUGH GRATITUDE AND GRIT

There is an interesting symbiotic relationship between gratitude and grit – when we tap into one, we have more access to the other. When I have a hard time accessing gratitude, it's my grit that comes to the forefront, and I rely on it to help me cope with challenging situations. But when I feel depleted and far from my grit, pausing to connect with gratitude refuels my hope and gives me energy for perseverance.

Gratitude opens us up to possibility and hope; it deepens our connection to what is nurturing and sustaining us now. Grit, on the other hand, is connected to our goals, passions, and values; it moves us forward in the face of difficulty. When we are more aware of both of these qualities, we're more likely to find the motivation to persevere through challenges, which strengthens our resilience.

Resilience is our ability to meet challenges, adapt, and keep getting up even when we fall or stumble. We all have natural strengths that contribute to this (gratitude and grit being examples), and we continue to develop resilience as we go through life. Nurturing the power of gratitude and grit together amplifies the benefit of both toward growing greater resiliency.



The interconnection of gratitude and grit



BECOME AWARE OF GRATITUDE AND GRIT

This first section is about *becoming aware* – learning to intentionally notice and acknowledge parts of your day or experiences that can help you tap into gratitude and grit.

The *gratitude* portion in this section is about focusing on what is going well or what nurtures a more open attitude in you. This will reveal what sparks joy and thankfulness for you. The regular practice of noticing these things allows them to happen with more ease, even during times of stress.

The *grit* portion in this section is about becoming aware of how you manage daily stressors and get through challenging situations. What do you find challenging? What do you draw from inside of yourself when things get hard? Becoming more aware of your challenges can also bring a clearer sense of your own courage.

Use one question or many to focus your reflection. Remember to set up your space, find your own rhythm, and take care of yourself after journaling.

Reviewing the Process

BUILDING ON GRATITUDE

What patterns am I noticing about what is going well in my life? What is surprising me?

What situations tend to prompt feelings of gratitude? What emotions are part of my experience of gratitude?

BUILDING ON GRIT

What patterns am I noticing about my own perseverance?

What habits, beliefs, or choices tend to help me carry on, and which ones hinder me?

BRINGING THEM TOGETHER

What is it like to notice both gratitude and grit? Is one easier than the other?

GRATITUDE

What helps me stay open-minded and openhearted? What am I thankful for?

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GRIT

When am I able to move forward in the face of obstacles? What qualities do I recognize in myself that help me persevere?

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Experiencing moments of joy throughout the day – whether they’re small or otherwise – can help us buffer against stress and foster resilience. —MARWA FADOL