

PRESENTER'S GUIDE

Attitude of Gratitude

WORKSHOP

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PRESENTER’S GUIDE OVERVIEW

This presenter’s guide provides a step-by-step explanation of a gratitude workshop for athletes. Participation in the “Attitude of Gratitude” workshop can be useful in increasing the well-being and decreasing the ill-being of athletes. Facilitation tips and handouts are provided.

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ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Timeline: plan for 1 hour (approximately 60 minutes of content)

5 min Introduction

15 min Didactic Portion

35 min Cultivating Gratitude Activity

1. Complete *Cultivating Gratitude Activity* Worksheet (20 min)
2. Small Group/Pair Discussion (5 min)
3. Large Group Sharing and Debrief (10-15 min)

5 min Review *Living Gratitude* Worksheet

Room set-up:

Reserve a room for the workshop. A room that allows for a U-shape arrangement of chairs or chairs and tables that can be later moved into small groups of 4-5 is ideal.

Presenter preparation:

- Read workshop guide
- Make handouts
 - Cultivating Gratitude Activity Worksheet (print single-sided)
 - Living Gratitude Worksheet (print double-sided)
- Bring at least one pen or pencil for each athlete
- Remind athletes about the workshop time and place

ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

WORKSHOP PROTOCOL

Developed by: Nicole Gabana, Ph.D., CMPC

1. 5 min Introduction

“Who can think of an example of a character trait of a great athlete?”

“Can someone give me an example of one trait that makes them better as an athlete (for example, hard-working, team-oriented, dedicated, passionate, resilient)?”

“We associate some traits with sports more than others....”

“Does anyone know someone whose humor makes her (or him) a better athlete?”

“How about gratitude? Do you think being grateful has the potential to make you better as an athlete? How?”

2. 15 min (total) Didactic Portion

“Today we are going to talk about the concept of gratitude. First, I’m going to start by giving you a brief background about the research on gratitude. I am not here to preach sunshine and rainbows to you. I don’t believe it is possible, or helpful for that matter, to be positive all the time. As athletes, we are driven by dissatisfaction. It can be one of the biggest motivators to work harder and push farther. One of the greatest traits of elite athletes is being resilient, not only physically but mentally. When you are at your lowest point, what pushes you to keep going? What motivates you? The research shows that gratitude has been linked to resiliency; namely, that the more I appreciate the opportunities around me, the more I am able to respond productively when the going gets tough. Seeing the opportunity in every experience is the key to getting better. I am not saying you should be grateful for everything that happens. Honestly, if you felt grateful for getting injured, I might start to wonder...but in every moment there is a chance for an opportunity. Being grateful for the moment can open our eyes to the resources available to us; the people who are there to help us; the strengths within us that help us to overcome obstacles.

Today we will talk about how practicing gratitude has the potential to benefit you, not only in sport but in life as well. Like anything else in sport, what you get out of this will depend on what you put in. We don’t go to the weight room once and expect to see gains. We don’t train for a week and expect to be at our peak for the season. Skills take time. The mental stuff is just like the physical stuff. The more you put in, the more you get out. Gratitude practice works the same way” (Gabana, Steinfeldt, Wong, Chung, & Svetina, 2019)

“SO HOW DOES GRATITUDE WORK?”

“I want to share a parable with you about an old Cherokee and his grandson (author anonymous). The old man told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, ‘My son, the battle is between two wolves inside us all. One is evil...it is jealousy, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, and arrogance. The other is good...it is joy, truth, humility, strength, integrity, and faith.’ The young boy thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, ‘Which wolf wins?’ The old man simply replied, ‘The one you feed.’”

Connect parable to purpose/importance of gratitude practice:

“Gratitude... in other words, how we feed the good wolf!”

Discuss (5 min): Facilitate a discussion of some of the **benefits that could result from** practicing gratitude [The list below includes evidence-based benefits of practicing gratitude.]:

- Enthusiasm
- Alertness/energy
- Achieving goals
- Determination
- Optimism
- Reduced burnout
- Emotional closure
- Decreased depression
- Better sleep
- Interpersonal connectedness
- Life satisfaction
- Better psychotherapy outcomes
- Positive mood
- Increased perceived social support
- Reduction of somatic (body) symptoms
- Altruism (helping others)

Discuss (5 min): Facilitate a discussion of **how gratitude works** by sharing and discussing the following mechanisms:

- *Novelty* – keeps things new; fights off hedonic adaptation (how we quickly adapt to new/good things and they lose their “newness”—like getting a new cell phone)
- *Specificity* – try to be as specific as possible about *why* we are grateful—this helps us elaborate on our blessings and maximizes positive benefits, allowing us to savor our gifts more deeply (Gabana et al., 2019).
- *Variety* – stretch yourself to be creative when thinking about the things you feel grateful for—a person, a moment, an event, a challenging experience, possessions, weather, etc.

- *Frequency* – the more the better! But even writing down 3 good things that happened 5 times per week can produce a positive effect.
- *Interpersonal connection* – when we express gratitude to others, it can strengthen the bond between ourselves and others (e.g., family, friends, teammates, coaches, teachers)
- *Intrapersonal awareness* – helps us to be more grateful and aware of our own strengths, gifts, and talents; for example, reflecting upon gratitude for your body and all it does for you not only in sport, but on a day-to-day basis can make us appreciate things we typically overlook.
- *Mindfulness* – increases our ability to be present in the moment and aware of all the good around us.
- *Benefit finding* – challenges us to find the good in both enjoyable and stressful experiences; increases cognitive flexibility, helping us to cope with difficult moments and build a resilient mindset.
- *Fosters a “growth mindset”* – by reframing challenges into opportunities for improvement. (“What can I be grateful for, what can I take/learn from this experience?”)
- *Brings our attention to social support networks and resources available to us.*
- *Broaden and Build Theory* (Fredrickson, 2009) – positive vs. negative emotions (negative tend to narrow our view; positive broaden our perspective, creativity, problem-solving, and decision-making, and help us build resources to reach our goals such as social support).
- *Creating cognitive habits* – similar to building physical habits (like training), the more you practice, the more your brain becomes accustomed to thinking this way.
- *Increases sport satisfaction and reduces burnout in athletes* – this isn’t limited to sport gratitude, but rather means that merely having a grateful perspective in life can contribute to more positive outcomes in sport.

Help the athletes process what areas of sport/life might benefit from gratitude practice.

Discuss (5 min): Facilitate a discussion of “How to feed your **Good Wolf**” by sharing and discussing the following ideas:

- *Gratitude journal*
- *Gratitude letters*
- *Mindfulness*
- *Meditation*
- *Noticing the good*
- *Describe why each good thing happened*
- *Establishing traditions, habits*
- *Thanking people, events, places, situations, yourself, etc.*
- *Gratitude apps*

Creating gratitude habits – examples: writing thank you notes, prayer, morning/night offering, cues (e.g., shower, drive to work), meditation, journaling, reflection, and interpersonal sharing.

Research on gratitude journals – produced greater enthusiasm, alertness, determination, goal progress in areas of interpersonal relationships, health, academic performance, and increased altruism (Gabana et al., 2019).

3. 35 min Cultivating Gratitude Activity

Instructions: “In the next 20-30 minutes, you will be engaging in a personal gratitude reflection activity. Please make a list of all the things and/or people you feel grateful for in your life. These could be people, events, material goods, experiences, or personal characteristics, to name a few. After making your list, please write a brief statement about *why* you feel grateful for each item on the list, and what meaning it has in your life.”

Hand out *Cultivating Gratitude Activity Worksheet*.

Small Group/Pair Discussion (5 min):

In small groups/pairs, please share and discuss your gratitude lists, sharing your “why’s.”

Large Group Sharing and Debrief (10-15 minutes):

Small groups/pairs return to the large group. Ask participants to share and discuss their gratitude lists and their meaning.

Debrief the activity with the following discussion questions:

1. How did it feel to see all the things you are grateful for written down on paper?
2. How was it to share your gratitude lists with other people? What was difficult/easy/unexpected about doing this?
3. What are similarities you noticed in discussing your gratitude lists with one another? What are some differences?
4. What was your experience in explaining why you feel grateful for each item on the list, and what meaning it has in your life?
5. Would you consider actively participating in gratitude expression activities in your daily life? Why or why not?
6. How might you continue to practice consciously expressing gratitude in the future? How could you see it benefiting you in different areas (e.g., personal, athletic, academic, social)?

“Questions? Comments?”

4. 5 min Review *Living Gratitude* Worksheet

Distribute “*Living Gratitude* Worksheet” for athletes to take home with them.

REFERENCES

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- Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60, 410-421. doi:10.1037/00003-066X.60.5.410

FACILITATION TIPS FOR SMALL GROUP WORKSHOPS

Facilitating small groups composed of individuals of different backgrounds, goals, and experiences can present numerous challenges, even for seasoned group leaders. The purpose of this section is to provide you with some basic information and suggestions in the hope of making your presenter experience productive for all participants.

Goals

- *Keep the group focused on the task at hand* – Help the group to stay aware of the time allotted for each task, and when needed take an active and direct role to ensure that tasks are accomplished in a timely fashion.
- *Encourage participation and value input from all group members* – Typically, productive groups are those in which all members believe that what they have to contribute is important information. Your task is to ensure that all participants feel respected and have opportunities and sufficient time to make contributions.
- *Guide rather than control how the group solves problems* – You want to facilitate discussions on how to solve problems rather than to simply tell the group how things should be done. This approach is more likely to empower group members and foster their ownership of the strategies that were agreed upon by the group.
- *Create an environment that is psychologically and emotionally safe* – Do your best to keep personality and power struggles out of group interactions.

How to meet these goals

- *Set the tone* – Your behavior sets the norm for the group early on in the workshop. If you are distracted and off task, the group is likely to emulate or react to your behaviors.
 - Be prepared, positive, energetic, task focused, and engaging
 - Encourage participation by being an effective communicator and gatekeeper (see below)
- *Be a role model of effective communication* – As a presenter, you need to demonstrate solid interpersonal and communication skills.
 - *Encourage discussion through use of open-ended questions* (e.g., “How do you think that will play out in the world of sport?”). Open-ended questions generate more information than closed questions, which can typically be answered with one word (e.g., “Do you think that expressing gratitude is helpful?”).
 - *Paraphrase responses from group members* – When you use your own words to restate comments or suggestions from participants, you not only show that you are listening and interested in their viewpoints, but you also check to make sure that you understood their intended meanings accurately.
 - *Keep the conversation focused on the task at hand* – Use selective attention to filter out unrelated information, while underscoring the relevant information that was offered.
 - *Acknowledge input, summarize key points, and provide related examples* – By using minimal encouragers like nodding and saying “Uh hum,” you demonstrate your interest in the other person’s contributions. In addition, when you summarize group members’ key points and offer related examples, you reinforce the importance of these contributions and ensure that others in the group heard and appreciate them as well.

- *Be an effective GATEKEEPER*
 - *Invite, but do not force, input from all participants* – Your goal is to get contributions from all participants. Therefore, you should invite group members to share their thoughts (e.g., “Sofia, I was wondering what you were thinking about Jake’s suggestion”), but you should not demand input if the person chooses not to share.
 - *Foster a “one voice” communication policy* – In some groups, conversations may spring up within subgroups or several individuals may talk at the same time. If this occurs you can institute a “one voice” policy such that only one person speaks at a time.
 - *In situations where one person is dominating the conversation, ask others in the group to comment or offer suggestions.* – For example, “That is a good point, Kayla. Deon, how do you think that would work with your idea for using gratitude activities in a business setting?”
 - *Pay attention to the nonverbals for indications of group dissent or personality issues* – When facilitating the group, you should not only be listening to the person speaking, but also observe how others in the group are reacting to what and how things are being said. This strategy may help you identify potential issues that, if left unaddressed, could fester into bigger problems.
 - *Reflect questions directed to you back to the group* – Group members may ask you direct questions because they assume that you are the most knowledgeable. In general, answer questions about the workshop process directly (e.g., “How much time do we have left to discuss?”), but deflect content questions (e.g., “How would you find time to keep a gratitude journal?”) back to the group by using statements like, “I have several suggestions, but I would like to know what others in the group have to offer.”
- *Strive to gain personal power*
 - *Treat everyone with respect and value their input* – In other words, treat everyone in the group as the expert on themselves and their own experience. Thank participants for sharing their thoughts even if their contributions are not directly on target.
 - *Accept your own mistakes* – If you make a mistake, let the group know. By so doing you are modeling risk taking and creating an environment where others are likely to be more willing to offer their ideas.
 - *Be consistent* – Remember to walk the talk. For example, if you instituted a one voice policy, you should not talk over someone else.
 - *Offer, but do not impose, suggestions* – You can offer suggestions, but you should do so in a manner that others feel comfortable sharing their ideas. For example, you might say something like, “I think that planning a gratitude activity today could be helpful. What do others in the group think?”
- *Keep it safe*
 - *Intervene and provide feedback in situations where personal verbal attacks occur* – One of the goals of facilitating an effective group is to ensure that the experience is psychologically and emotionally safe for all participants. In situations, where verbal attacks are directed at one or more group members you need to address the issue directly and keep the focus on the content and not on personality variables.
 - *Use your own body language (i.e., moving toward or between) to provide support or diffuse tension* – In times of turmoil or confusion, the group will typically look to the facilitator to resolve the situation. By simply moving forward in your chair, you demonstrate your willingness to address the issue immediately and, in some cases, this action is enough to diffuse emerging conflict between group members or to show your support for an individual in need.

HANDOUTS

ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

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CULTIVATING GRATITUDE ACTIVITY WORKSHEET

Make a list of things you are grateful for in your life. Using the lines below, state why each of these things are meaningful to you. These can be people, events, or any number of things.

I AM GRATEFUL FOR...

(Example) My brother/sister
(Example) My schedule this semester
(Example) My teammate Sam
(Example) The weather today

BECAUSE...

He/she is always supportive when I need someone to talk to.
I have Fridays off, so I can take a nap and feel more rested.
He/she challenges me to work hard at practice and be better.
I spent time outside with friends, which made me happy.

I AM GRATEFUL FOR...

BECAUSE...

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

LIVING GRATITUDE WORKSHEET

Exercises to Cultivate Gratitude in Life and in Sport

1. Write a Gratitude Letter.

Write a letter of gratitude to someone explaining: (a) Why you are grateful to them; (b) What impact this has had on your life; and (c) How your life/experience would be different without them. If you have the opportunity, reading the letter to them in person can increase the significance of this experience. Giving or sending it to them in writing works, too.

2. Grateful reflection. (This can be practiced mentally or in writing.)

Questions to help us reflect on what we're grateful for and whom we're grateful to:

- What went well this week?
- What are some good things in my life that I've taken for granted?
- What are some good things in my sport that I've taken for granted?
- What do I like most about my classes this semester?
- What was my favorite meal this week and why?
- What do I like most about the city and/or country I live in?
- What opportunities have I had to use my strengths/talents?
- What opportunities have I had to serve others?
- What do I appreciate about my teammates?
- In what ways have I grown as a person?
- In what ways have I grown as a teammate?
- What are some challenges I've overcome in my life?
- What gives me hope for the future?
- What gives me meaning in life?
- How do I find meaning in my sport?
- What coaches have contributed positively to my sport experience and how have they done so?
- Who has been a source of emotional support in my life?
- Who has been a source of encouragement to me?
- Who inspires me and why?
- With whom did I have a pleasant interaction in practice this week?
- With whom did I have an enjoyable conversation this week?
- What will I miss about my collegiate sport experience?
- Who makes me laugh?

3. Write down 3 Good Things (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

Make a list of 3 good things that happen every day for one week. Consider continuing this practice for a month, or adjusting the frequency (for example, 2-3 times per week for a month). This could be related or unrelated to your sport experience. Examples might include: the weather, a good meal, spending time with friends/family, a positive event, overcoming a challenge, getting sleep, goal achievement.

4. Start a Gratitude Journal.

Examples of journal prompts include:

- When have you felt grateful or thankful, deeply appreciative of someone or something?
- What gifts do you treasure most?
- When has someone gone out of their way to do something good for you?
- When have you simply basked in how lucky you are?
- When do you feel the urge to repay a kindness?
- What inspires you to get creative about giving back?

5. Download a Gratitude App.

Consider using an app on your phone such as 365 Gratitude, Gratitude, Live Happy, Day One Journal, Grateful, Happify, or Happier. This can allow you to practice a grateful mindset regularly.