30-Day Challenge

30 days…you can do anything for 30 days. Whether it be drinking a healthy green smoothie, reading 10 pages from a book, or writing a thank you card, simple habits are easy to implement into our daily life.

Notice how I said, “simple” habits. It’s when we attempt to drastically change our lifestyle that we run into problems with “follow through”. If you tried to get healthy by simultaneously giving up carbs, exercising 2 hours every day, drinking 60% of your body weight in water, and sleeping eight hours in an altitude tent…good luck.

We are not after extreme change, we are about what Robert Duhigg in his breakout book, *Habits,* calls a keystone habit. A keystone habit is a habit that, when performed, has a multiplied positive effect in our lives.

The simpler the better.

“A river cuts through the rock, not because of it’s power. But because of it’s persistence.”
-Jim Watkins

Since you are reading this, I assume you are familiar with The Mr. Thank You project where I wrote 5 thank you cards every day for 365 consecutive days. It’s funny when people tell me, “I’m going to do that. I’m going to write 5 cards every day for a year.”

My answer is, “Don’t. You really don’t have to write 5 every day to get the maximum benefits.”

A big reason I challenged myself to write five every day was simply so people might say, “If he did five every day, I can do one.”

The simple habit of becoming a ***good finder***, and ***living gratitude as an expression*** is where the big benefit lay.

We are not even talking about an entire year here, we are talking about a 30-day challenge where you commit to writing at least one thank you card every day for 30 consecutive days.

At Mr. Thank You, we are committed to helping people make gratitude a habit. It only makes your life better, and everyone else’s too. Some benefits you will notice immediately, while others will come with time and practice.

In this document, you have:

The gratitude tracker: this is where you’ll keep track of who you plan to, and ultimately who you write your thank you cards to.

Also, there will be some examples of types of cards you can write, and some powerful questions to make these next 30 days the most impactful.

You can print this document and fill out your answers or write them in a journal if you have one.

My only request is that you tell us about your journey. If you haven't yet, create a profile on www.MrThankYou.com and log the cards you have written. We'll keep track of the cards you give away, and your number adds to our global number, and will help us reach the goal of inspiring 74 million thank you cards written around the world (effectively 1% of the world's population).

Also, if you have a story of an experience from one of the cards you wrote, or from the overall experience of your Mr. Thank You Challenge, let us know through the "Share a Story" section on your portal, or through the Mr. Thank You Facebook page: www.Facebook.com/MrThankYou. Also, if you document the project through instagram or twitter, make sure to tag #mrthankyou or #mrthankyouproject. We love to see who is out there participating.

A note on handwriting:

If you are self-conscious about your handwriting, a good thing to keep in mind is that it's more likely in your head than anything. In the hundreds of cards I have received, there is only one or two times when I had a hard time reading what the other person wrote.

-If you believe you are one of those 1 or 2 people, you can simply type up the letter, print, and sign it.

Handling people's reactions, or lack of:

Something I learned during the Mr. Thank You Project, is that some people will be elated to receive your card. However, not everyone says *thank you* for a thank you card. You will likely hear from some people appreciating what you said, but don't count on it, and don't worry about it if they don't respond. It doesn't mean they didn't appreciate it, and it doesn't mean they hate you. Lol. I struggled with those thoughts as I only had approximately 10% of the people who received my 1825 thank you cards say anything back to me.

-Gratitude, at it's core, is a gift given freely and with out expectation. When we get annoyed with people not responding to our gratitude, it's important to check our intentions. Is this an actual expression of appreciation, or an attempt to elicit a reaction? Your Mr. (or Ms.) Thank You Project will be a practice in giving up your ego. That alone will have positive benefits in your life.

MY Mr. (Ms.) Thank You Project:

I am committed to writing (circle one):

1 - 3 - 5 _____ (other) thank you cards every day for the next 30 days.

This is important to me because:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

I will reward myself for completing my 30 day challenge by:

_____

Buy yourself a nice dinner, get a massage, get some concert tickets. While you will receive many positive benefits from making gratitude a habit, it's important to celebrate our accomplishments and give us something to look forward to.

(OPTIONAL) If I miss a day I will (insert pain or consequence here):

_____

We do things because they bring us closer to pleasure, or away from pain. While this is optional to include a consequence, it might help you stay on track.

I will be accountable to:

_____

It is a proven fact that accountability helps us stay on track. You might have a friend who wants to go through this 30-day challenge with you, or you may simply plan to announce it on the Mr. Thank You community Facebook page. Either way, accountability can help you follow through.

List:

You've probably already thought of several people you want to write your cards to. Below is an opportunity to document and expound on that list. Keep in mind that it's also a great idea to be open to inspiration through out the day of who you might want to appreciate. Here are some thought joggers: *family, friends, old friends from years past, people who have positively impacted your life-coaches, teachers, mentors, leaders, managers, bosses, co-workers, bosses, employees, clients. People who have inspired you-authors, business owners, actors, actresses, founders of organizations you believe in.*

-**Track the cards you send**. I use to keep track of everyone I sent a card to on an excel spreadsheet to keep from sending duplicates on accident. That's why we created www.MrThankYou.com so you can log everyone you write cards to, and it will keep track of it for you.

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Thank You Cards:

“Why accept a gift that you aren’t willing to thank someone for giving you?”

This is a quote from a woman I met after my TEDx speech in Traverse City Michigan. She came up to tell me that she was known in her community for writing a lot of thank you cards. It was an important practice for her to write thank you cards to anyone who gave her a gift, did something nice for her, or invited her to a party.

What it so important in the art of appreciating people for their generosity, is that you are honoring their efforts and encouraging them to repeat this activity with you and others. When we ignore appreciating people, we can have the opposite affect.

Have you ever invested a lot of time or money in a gift for someone only to have that person say nothing in return? How did that feel? The bigger impact here is that, as we stack up experiences of people who never said, “thank you” we become less inclined to be generous.

We start to think, “Will they even care if I did this for them?” and we start holding back our desire to give.

This is why the mere act of saying *thank you* is so important. It inspires people to continue being generous.

Here are some simple formatting ideas on how to write a thank you card:
-Start by simply acknowledging what they did, said, made, or purchased for you.
-Note why you appreciate it.
-Share a possible time or opportunity you plan to use it, or the future benefit you believe it will bring.
-Acknowledge how much you appreciate the relationship.
*Below are two simple examples:

(for an awesome t-shirt at a birthday gift)

Angela,
thank you for going out of your way to find me that awesome t-shirt for my birthday. You know one of my favorite things is to wear “clothing that says something” and what you picked out for me is an article I will wear proudly. I’ve always appreciate our friendship and your willingness to think outside the box. Grateful for you!
-John
——————————————————————————————
(for a great job-offer introduction)

Tony,
I just want you to know how much I appreciated that introduction to Jim for the job opportunity. The meeting went really well and they made me an offer. I don’t take things like this lightly considering you put your reputation on the line for me. If there is any way I can return the favor or make any introductions for you, I’m happy to do so. Oh, by the way…here’s a gift card to your favorite restaurant for you to take the wifey out to. Grateful for our friendship bud.
-Nick ***(The gift card is not necessary, AND it doesn’t hurt if you’ve got the budget for it ;-)***

Acknowledgement and Appreciation cards:

One of the greatest unexpressed needs in the world is for people to be seen, valued, and respected.

The origins of the word appreciate is the latin word “appretiare” which literally means *to appraise or set the value of a thing*. Before we ever sell an item of high value, we get an “appraisal” where we hire someone to take stock and tell us what something is worth.

The appraiser has a list of questions that they run through in order to establish an appropriate value. How do we do that for another human being?
Curiosity is the precursor to appreciation. You can appreciate anyone if you ask the right questions.

What are their goals?
What are their values?
What are their struggles?
What do they deal with?
What is great or unique about this person?
What does this person do you want to encourage and or see more of?

Most people are in their own heads about themselves. When we take the time to value and appreciate people, we are essentially handing them over an appraisal of how great and valuable they are to us and to the world.

These are some of my favorite cards to write because they are so unexpected, and thus tremendously impactful to whoever you give them to.

<u>What to say?</u>
Because there are so many variations of how to write these cards, I included one to give you a taste.

(for an old teacher who inspired you)
Mrs. Arnette,
You may or may not remember me, but you taught my Freshman English class at Eastern Prep high school. I wasn’t exactly your best student, but I have to tell you that your class changed my life. Before coming in to your class I hated reading. I avoided it like the plague. But you found such interesting books that weren’t on the normal “assigned reading list” for high school kids that it actually opened my eyes to a world bigger than I knew possible.
Another thing I needed to bring up is, one day I forgot to turn in a paper because…honestly, I forgot it was even due. While I wanted an “exception” or a “make up”, you stuck to your guns and gave me a zero. In that moment I was really angry. But it taught me a valuable lesson that life doesn’t give you “exceptions” when you don’t do the work. It made me more responsible, and drove me to be better.
I don’t know how often you get letters from students like this (but I’ll guess it’s not enough). Whether you hear it from everyone or not, you’ve made a real difference on this planet… especially to me.

Sincerely,
Jack Hansin *P.S. Here’s my email if you’d like to stay in touch: <u>Jack@JackHansin.co</u>*

Notes to Self (version 1)

There are two variations of these types of letters to write.

One is in-line with the cards above where you take the time to truly appreciate who you are, what you have been through, where you have come from, and who you are becoming.

Don't be bashful. We are our own worst critics and it's not often that we take the time to highlight our growth and contributions.

Here is an example:

Angie,

Wow…here we are. 38 years old and you're not dead. Had you asked me if I thought that was possible ten years ago, I wouldn't believe you. We've been and gone through so much together. The marriage…the divorce. The jobs…oh all the jobs. Remember when you didn't think ANYONE would hire you? Well here you are. Running your own business like you always dreamed. While you lost your first love, you found someone who was such a better fit for who you are becoming. You even have 2 kids…seriously the universe let you have two kids, on your own. And while they make you crazy, you wouldn't have it any other way. You are on track to have your greatest income earning year yet. The best part is next year will probably be even better.

Sure you aren't at the weight you were in high school, but you look great. You feel great. You actually love yourself for who you are. Remember how worried you use to be about what everyone thought of you back in high school. Remember how good it felt go to the 20 year reunion and to see how many people have changed, while others stayed the same. You grew. You changed. You are unrecognizable. I am so damn proud of you for where you are.

Of course your not perfect. Nobody is. But you know what…every day, little by little, you're getting better and better.

Peace out,
Angie 2.0

Notes to Self (version 2)

The second type of “note to self” is where you write a letter to yourself at a specific time and age that was very challenging, even traumatic for you. A time that, when you think about it, there is a lot of negative emotional charge to it.

Write this card to that specific version of yourself at that time of your life. Imagine you are sitting down with that version of yourself and you finally got to have that conversation you wish someone had with you back then. Bring love and wisdom.

-Create space to have those emotions you felt back then to be honored and warranted. Simply saying, “it’s ok to feel everything you are feeling right now” is a great way to do that.
-Then state what was true about this experience, but try to relive it like a history book would explain it. Remove judgement. Not “He’s a jerk for doing this” or “You’re stupid for thinking this”. Go with the facts of what actually happened. “This happened, and this happened, and you felt *this* way.”

Then share the mature wisdom of “what’s so” now in your life. Share what gifts have come from this experience, and what fears never actually came to fruition. Example: The world didn’t end, you weren’t single forever, you found someone better, a new opportunity showed up.

As you write this card, note how you feel after? You might notice some immediate impact or benefit. It also may take time. I wrote 20+ cards like this to myself during the Mr. Thank You Project, and they created tremendous healing in my life.

Here is an example of one such letter (true story from my life):

John (of 13),
so…today was not a good day. Or at least it feels that way. Your girlfriend just broke up with you and then started dating your best friend. Not going to lie…it hurts. You are in pain. And rightly so. You not only lost your very first relationship, but you lost the trust of your closest friendship. You feel alone. You don’t feel like you can trust women because you think they are conniving and evil, and you don’t feel you can trust people who get close to you because they might hurt you again like your buddy did.
While this will bother you for a few years, realize this…it all works out. You learned that everything ends for a reason. You eventually found a woman that you’d marry and who you’d have a family together. And no, it wasn’t your 13 year old sweetheart. It’s someone you wind up meeting much later in life, after many other relationships and break ups. Each one of those relationships (including this one), made you more aware and adept to what you like, don’t like, and how to be a better partner to your significant other because of the mistakes you’ve made.
This needed to happen. You’ll be ok. The pain is real, and it will go away. Just remember, you are awesome, you are lovable, you are going to do some important things on this planet. And you can bet, that you won’t do it alone.

-John (of 35)

Peace Cards

Does anyone really love apologizing? Not exactly a topic people think about mastering in their life time.
-Rather than talking about this from the stand point of an apology, we will reference the topic as "taking responsibility."

Responsibility is not about accepting fault. ***Responsibility is about taking ownership of life working at a high level for both you and others.***

During my year long gratitude journey, I came across an interesting challenge of, "how do I bring gratitude to painful or challenging experiences?"

There was a specific client that I used to be close with and, as what happens sometimes in life and business, things didn't end well. We both were at odds with each other for months. **Everything changed the moment I decided the relationship was more important than being right.**

A thank you card didn't seem appropriate, so I decided to visit my favorite stationary store for ideas. I found a rubber stamp with a *peace symbol* on it. "Perfect", I thought. I proceeded to stamp some blank stationary with that symbol and wrote the below note.

While there were things I could have "blamed" her for in the breakdown, I simply took responsibility for what there was for me to take responsibility for. Own what I could own. Nothing more.
The result was that the client immediately reached back out to me to rekindle our friendship and was ready to move beyond our breakdown.

No relationship is perfect. What I learned was that, ***whoever takes the highest level of responsibility in a relationship, has the power to transform or change that relationship.*** I wrote 20 or so of these cards, and it changed my life.

Who do you need to make an amends with? Who's relationship do you miss being a part of? Or what relationship just bothers you that you are ready to have a break through in? Try it out. Here are some tips and my example of the card I wrote to that client:

-Own what you can own.
-Reference how you value the relationship above all else
-AVOID: passive aggressiveness, or alluding to "OK, I apologized…now it's your turn."
-Give up the need to hear back. They may respond, they may not. Not everything can be repaired in a single letter, but you'd be surprised about the positive impact that it can have.

Jennifer,
Several months ago, we were handling an order for you and were unable to honor the delivery date you were expecting. Please forgive me. We didn't communicate what we needed and that put you in a tough spot at the last minute. I consider you such a good client and friend that it pains me we haven't talked in almost a year. I am not reaching out to ask for your business, but merely to ask for your forgiveness. You are such a great person and mom; I am grateful to have met you. I wish you the best in business and life this year. If there's anything I can do for you, please let me know. Take care Jennifer. -John Israel

What's next

Once you've completed your 30 day challenge, it's important to think about: *what's next?*

There are 2 pathways that people go after their 30 day challenge.

1) 30 days was good enough. Maybe you got all you needed to get out of these thirty and you're ready to move on. If that's you, that's awesome. We're grateful you had the courage, willingness, and openness to do something that truly makes a difference in the world.

2) You want to continue the habit. You've seen the benefit. You have a streak going. Why stop now?
-Habits can change our life because they change *how* we live our life. They adjust our focus. They transform our thinking. They grow our self-perception.
-Take a moment and imagine what your life would be like if, every day, you made it a point to express love, gratitude, and appreciation with those around you (that doesn't even need to be through a thank you card btw). How might that affect your family? Your community? Your career? The world?

Before you psych yourself out that you need to commit to writing thank you cards every day forever, just think of the next milestone.

Can you go another 30 days? Can you go 6 months? Can you go an entire year? Share your commitment on our Mr. Thank You Facebook page and go for it. We are happy to support you.

***Just make sure to keep logging your cards at www.MrThankYou.com as you are a key player in our reaching 1% of the world's population.

Also, if you haven't yet, make sure to pick up a copy of the Mr. Thank You Project on Amazon. If you'd like to purchase a bulk order of books for your clients, employees, or organization- email us at: admin@mrthankyou.com

BONUS!!! - COMMUNAL GRATITUDE EXPERIENCE:

Around the world, communities have gotten together and created their own Mr. Thank You Projects.

Companies have created workshops where everyone gets together and writes thank you cards to clients, fellow employees, and family. Churches have organized to write thank you cards to visiting guests, or to homeless people with "blessing bags", or to prison inmates. Teachers and students have collaborated in thanking long term faculty, or writing cards to parents, coaches and mentors.

The compounding effect of getting an entire community to express gratitude has the ability to change the culture to one of love, respect, and empathy.

If you'd like to do something like this, we'd love to hear about it. Share the story on our facebook page, and or email us if you have any questions on best practices. admin@MrThankYou.com

With Gratitude,
John Israel - Founder - The Mr. Thank You Project