The Gratitude Practice

A guide to notice what mattered, recognize your progress, and gain clarity for what's ahead.

Practice Makes Progress.

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GRATITUDE IS A PRACTICE

We are all running at such a fast pace and the pace of change is increasing each year. At this pace, it is easy to move from one season to the next without stopping long enough to recognize how far we've come. We deserve to take the time to appreciate our progress; how something you once struggled with has now become easier; or how much you've accomplished (even if you haven't reached your ultimate goal). Gratitude gives us a chance to notice our progress.

As part of the ALIGN community, you've been part of our work and our story in some way. This guide is a gift from us to you, offered with gratitude for that connection.

Use it as an invitation to pause: on your own, with your team, or in conversation with people who matter to you. Choose the questions that make you curious, and share the ones that start a conversation worth having.

Sometimes looking back long enough to appreciate where we've been helps us see more clearly where we want to go next.

With gratitude,
The ALIGN Team



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01 | NOTICE WHAT MATTERED

Gratitude begins with paying attention.

If you are like most high performers and leaders, you have plenty on your plate and the pace hasn't slowed in the last year. There are important yet competing priorities vying for our attention. Slowing down to reflect can feel counterproductive.

Gratitude interrupts that pattern.

It invites us to notice the people, experiences and moments that mattered and to consider why they mattered.



01 | Reflection

1. Who made a meaningful difference in your work or life this year? *What did they do, and why did it matter to you?*

2. What moment from this year do you want to remember? *What made it significant?*

3. What are you grateful you said yes to? What are you grateful you said no to? *What did those choices make possible?*

4. What challenge, disappointment or unexpected change gave you something valuable? *What can you appreciate now that may have been difficult to see while you were in it?*

5. What ordinary part of your work or life are you realizing you don't want to take for granted? *A person, routine, opportunity, relationship, place or experience you might otherwise overlook.*

01 | Connection

Use these questions with colleagues, your team, friends or the people around your table.

1. Who is someone you're especially grateful for this year, and why?

2. What happened this year that we haven't celebrated or appreciated enough?

3. What is something someone from this team did that made a difference to you?

4. What is something about this team, family or group that you hope we never take for granted?

5. What is one experience from this year that you're grateful we shared? What made it meaningful?

Pay It Forward.

Gratitude becomes more powerful when it is expressed.

Think of someone who came to mind as you answered these questions.

Tell Them.

Be specific about what they did, why it mattered and the difference it made.

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02 | RECOGNIZE YOUR PROGRESS

We tend to notice the distance still ahead more easily than the distance we've already traveled.

Progress can be easy to miss, especially when you're still focused on how far you have to go. Think about what feels different today than it did a year ago. Maybe something that once felt hard comes more naturally now. Maybe you handled a difficult moment differently or made a choice you wouldn't have made before. That counts. That's progress.

Some of our most meaningful growth never makes it onto a scorecard.

Practice Makes Progress.

AND, we have to stop occasionally to notice it.



02 | Reflection

1. Think back to yourself one year ago. *What can you do, understand or navigate today that was harder for you then?*

2. Where did you become more courageous, capable or confident this year? *What helped you grow?*

3. What did you practice this year that changed the way you lead, work or live?

4. What difficult conversation, decision or change are you proud of how you handled? *What did it require from you?*

5. Where did you make meaningful progress that others may not have seen? *What do you want to give yourself credit for?*

02 | Connection

Use these questions with colleagues, your team, friends or the people around your table.

1. Where have you seen meaningful progress in this team, group or relationship this year?

2. What can we do today that would have been harder for us a year ago?

3. Where have you noticed someone else grow? What specifically have you noticed?

4. What hard thing did we navigate well together? What did we do that helped?

5. What have we learned about ourselves and how we work together that we want to carry forward?

For Leaders-

One of the most important measures of leadership growth is what becomes possible for other people because of how we lead.

Consider:

Where are people more capable, confident or empowered because you coached, trusted, challenged or created clarity for them?

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03 | GAIN CLARITY FOR WHAT'S AHEAD

Reflection isn't only about looking backward.

Looking back can also help us get clearer about what we want going forward. Pay attention to what you want more of and what you're ready to leave behind. You may realize that something matters more than it used to, or that something else simply doesn't fit anymore. You don't need to have the year ahead figured out. You just need enough clarity to choose where to put your energy next.



03 | Reflection

1. What from this year do you want to intentionally carry forward? *A habit, relationship, mindset, practice, priority or way of working.*

2. What are you ready to leave behind? *What has served its purpose, stopped working or simply no longer deserves your energy?*

3. What became clearer to you this year about what matters most? *How do you want that understanding to influence your choices?*

4. Where do you need greater clarity going into the year ahead? *What conversation, decision, boundary or question could help create it?*

5. One year from now, what progress would you hope to recognize? What would you want to be able to celebrate? *What is one practice or choice that could begin moving you there?*

03 | Connection

Use these questions with colleagues, your team, friends or the people around your table.

1. What from this year should we intentionally carry forward?

2. What have we outgrown or need to do differently?

3. What matters most for us in the year ahead? Where does our attention need to go?

4. Where do we need greater clarity with one another? What assumptions need to become conversations, decisions or agreements?

5. What will we need from one another to make meaningful progress together?

Move Forward Together.

Meaningful progress happens when we understand what matters to one another and commit to moving in the same direction. Before you leave this conversation, consider what you each need to move forward.

Make a Commitment.

Name one thing you can count on each other to do differently in the year ahead.

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THE GIFT OF GRATITUDE

Think of one person who affected your year.

Think about someone who made a difference in your year. Maybe they showed up when you needed them, believed in you when you weren't quite there yet, or said something you needed to hear. Maybe life or work was simply better because they were part of it.

Who came to mind?

Don't leave your gratitude here.

Call them. Write the note. Send the text. Tell them across the table.

If you need a place to start:
I'm grateful for you because...
Something you did that mattered to me was...
The difference it made was...
What I hope you know is...

Your words are a gift to others, even when they aren't perfect.

Wishing you GRATITUDE. PROGRESS. CLARITY.

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