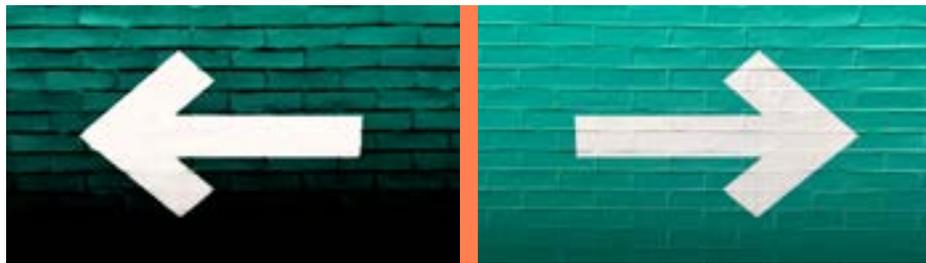


# Choices Towards Goodness



  
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SCIENCE & *gratitude*

# Choices Towards Goodness

Choices towards goodness: How an authentic practice of gratitude can lead you to happiness, well-being, and ultimately, to your personal brilliance.

Hello everyone and welcome!

My name is Karen Schaal. I am a doctoral researcher and through personal experimentation, discovered that

*“authentic gratitude is the most powerful transformative tool we have for positive and permanent change.”*



Realizing the value of science as an information source, and gratitude as a powerful vehicle for transformation and change, the SCIENCE&gratitude-based approach for happiness and well-being, is founded on

- developing self-awareness,
- understanding the science and process of change,
- authentic gratitude,
- choices towards goodness,
- discovering a noble calling in the small tasks,

that when repeated, will ultimately, lead us to our personal brilliance.

Over the next few pages, we are going to take a look at the science of change, and how we can use science to our great advantage in our personal development. We are going to understand how our body works in the creation of new habits, and the three simple things necessary for successful habit creation.

Our discussion of gratitude will take us from gratitude 101 to authentic gratitude to choices towards goodness; a journey of appreciation where you will come to see why gratitude in all its forms, is a powerful transformer of emotions and behaviors.

*\*this is a good time to have pen and paper handy, we are going to be having some fun here!*



# Choices Towards Goodness

So let's get started. Let's imagine a world in which we have the opportunity to choose many things, on a daily basis, that are going to make us happier.

*A world where we can intentionally choose, to feel more fulfilled and accomplished.*

*A world that is supplied with any tool we could need, to be at peace with ourselves, with others, and the world.*

The world we are imagining isn't a perfect world, by any means, but it is a world of fluidity and tempered spontaneity, a world that is malleable and fluid, *a world that asks for nothing more – than our participation.*



Coming to terms with change and the fluidity of life can be challenging. Many of us work long and hard hours, to achieve stability in our lives, to have a feeling of safety and security, yet, at the end of the day, time passes on, and with that, comes change; the unknown, translating into insecurities and fear.

Change can often be a loss, as well as a gain. For example, choosing to move away from good friends, for a career advancement. Experiencing raising children, and having them ultimately, grow up and leave.

Before my days as a research scientist and my experimentation with gratitude, I didn't know very much about change. I felt a sense of change in seeing my children grow and my parents age, but I wasn't paying attention to the process of change.

It wasn't until I began my doctoral research and added gratitude to my research design, and began my own experimentation with gratitude, did I begin to question how change really worked.

## Reflections:

- What are your feelings about change?
- Do you think it's possible to change at any age?
- What does it take, what are the conditions required, for you to change?

# Choices Towards Goodness

## Developing Self-Awareness

Before we begin any journey, we want to become aware. Much like we prepare when we go on vacation. We prepare when we want to renovate something. We make preparations for visitors and guests coming to our home.

*“Personal development and the process of change begins with self-awareness and paying attention to what is happening in our lives.”*

Think about this. Most of us probably spend more time, invested in our car, planning a vacation, checking out our screens, than we do putting intentional thought and action into our self-development and well-being.

So this first step is pretty easy. We are taking a couple steps back from our lives, and we are going to check out what's happening.

We are going to become observers. We are going to pay attention to what we are doing, and we are doing this with no judgment and no comparison. We are going to simply observe how we are negotiating and navigating through our day.

If we are new to self-observation and awareness, now is a good time to begin a journal. We want to remember what we are learning about ourselves and much of the insight that comes to us, is in the form of fleeting thoughts, that if not recorded, may be lost to memory.



### Reflections:

- How are we waking in the morning?
- How are we physically moving through the day?
- What are our interactions with others like?
- Do they represent the values we want to have?
- What is our overall attitude?
- How are we feeling?
- What is the tone of our thoughts, our feelings and actions?
- Are we content with what we see?
- Do we see opportunities for change?

\*do whatever needs to be done, so you are set up with some type of system, to recollect your observations!

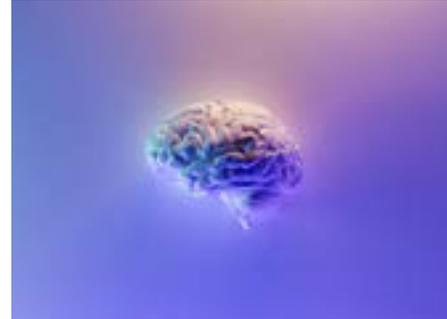
# Choices Towards Goodness

## Understanding the Science and Process of Change

If you made it through the introduction to self-awareness – congratulations. Self-observation can be eye opening and at the same time, cause us to turn away. Makes sense, doesn't it? Sometimes it's difficult to know where to begin. If we want to learn something, change a habit, create a new one. Where do we begin, and is there anything we can do, to guarantee success?

This is where science comes in. Over the past 20 years, for the first time in human history, research scientists have been able to look inside the brain and track emotions.

The creation of habits can be traced along neurological pathways in the brain; information highways created by focused, repetitive behavior.



Remember the three simple things necessary for successful habit creation? Well, here they are. Since habit creation is a physiological process, here are the optimal conditions for creating new habits.

- Focused,
- Repetitive behavior,
- Followed by rest.

That's it everybody. It's that simple. Doing the same behavior over, and over again, with focused energy, followed by a period of rest.

I remember thinking that there must be something else. Something more, than this three-step formula. But there wasn't. Focused, repetitive behavior, followed by rest; optimal conditions for habit formation and change.



### Reflections:

- Is the three-step framework of habit change clear?
- Have you experienced success in habit formation, using something similar to these three steps?
- What, if anything, could keep you from implementing the three-step framework of habit creation?

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## Authentic Gratitude

If science is the foundation we rely on, to provide us with basic information, then gratitude is the means by which we are going to fulfill our goals.

My first exposure to gratitude, came during studies in the field of positive psychology (the story is retold in my e-book "[The Pocket Guide to Gratitude](#)"). As I mentioned earlier, I knew nothing about gratitude, outside the normal niceties that we learn as children.

But what I was seeing in the research was remarkable. In all fields, academia, health, education, business, professionals across the globe agreed - gratitude was a positive modifier; both emotionally and behaviorally.

The positive emotion of gratitude changed things in a positive way. Incorporating gratitude into my doctoral research, I built a research model investigating the effect of gratitude journaling on elementary school children 'social competence'; basically, asking the question, would the kids be nicer to each other, if they wrote in a gratitude journal?



I also began my own personal experimentation with gratitude. Just like the three steps in change; 1), focused, 2), repetitive behavior, and 3), followed by rest.

The three steps in my initial practice of gratitude were 1), becoming aware, 2), remembering that change is incremental, and 3), trusting the process.

Results were good, but not stellar, until I discovered research suggesting that the people who received the greatest benefits from a practice of gratitude, were those *who had a life orientation towards thanksgiving and gratitude, and who saw life through the lens of appreciation; through good times, as well as through times of chaos and pain as well.*

It is this shift, from a compartmentalized practice of gratitude to a life orientation, where the true transformative effects of gratitude are realized.

### Reflections:

- What role has gratitude played in your life?
- What does gratitude look like to you?
- Would you prefer a compartmentalized or a life orientation practice of gratitude?

# Choices Towards Goodness

## Choices towards Goodness

Before we begin with choices towards goodness, let's recap.

So far, we have discussed developing personal awareness - without judgment and comparison, the science and process of change - focused, repetitive behavior, followed by rest, and the basics of a practice of gratitude - paying attention, incremental change, trusting the process, and we discussed authentic gratitude, which is viewing life through a lens, a prism, if you will, of sincere gratitude and thanksgiving.

Choices towards goodness came about when I was trying to simplify my message to a 4th grade class in Hyderabad, India. How could I explain to the students what gratitude was? The scientific community did not have a clear definition, what could I possibly say with clarity to 10 year olds? and then I realized,

*“authentic gratitude was making choices towards goodness, over and over again.”*



Intentional choices towards goodness, made over and over again, creating new neural pathways, grounded in goodness.

*Think about this for a minute.*

A habit grounded in goodness. Let me give you an example of what choices towards goodness might look like. We want to take care of our bodies. An authentic practice of gratitude begins with appreciation for ourselves. So when we wake up in the morning, we have a routine, and we care for ourselves, in a way, that lovingly invigorates us for our day.

*These are choices towards goodness.*

The direction our lives will go, will be directed by our choices, and choices towards goodness, over and over again, laying stones of positive emotions and experiences, creating new neural pathways in the brain, based on positive, life affirming choices - choices towards goodness.

*“Intentional choices towards goodness, made over and over again, creating new neural pathways, grounded in goodness.”*

# Choices Towards Goodness

## Discovering a Noble Calling in the Small Tasks

With everything that we've discussed thus far, discovering a noble calling in the small things that we do, is really the fuel that we are going to use to bring us through the more challenging times we may encounter, in our process of change. And we are going to do this through appreciation.

Self-appreciation encourages us to strive, with enthusiasm and passion.

Having a noble calling in the small things, in the small tasks that we do, brings meaning and value into our experiences. We become inspired. Our regular mundane tasks, come alive with intentional appreciation.

We can see how everything coming together, coupled with intentional thought and action, creates lives grounded in goodness. It doesn't happen by accident. It's not going to occur in default. This is intentional living. This is purposeful thought and action. This is

*attention to our emotions, and an awareness of our relationship with ourselves, others, and the world.*



Choices towards goodness is discovering our noble calling, and using the information that we have, to our great advantage.

It is practicing authentic gratitude, and demonstrating compassion and kindness, and sincere care and appreciation.

It is bravery and fortitude, and perseverance and resilience.

This is Science & *gratitude*.

The mind and the heart coming together. The logical and the intuitive blending. Expanding the mind and growing the heart.

### Reflections:

- What noble callings do we have in our lives?
- Can we see noble callings in the small things?
- In what area of our lives, do we find our noble calling?

## Choices Towards Goodness



Thanks Everybody!

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