


 Happiness Exercise 5 min/day Client No

The G.L.A.D. Technique

People tend to notice and remember negative stimuli more readily, which can undermine the positive experiences they encounter each day [1]. When we fail to notice positive experiences, they pass by without leaving a lasting impression, and we miss valuable opportunities to feel happier [2]. An effective way to compensate for this negativity bias is to purposefully take in the seemingly ordinary good things that happen daily.

Increasing our awareness of positive experiences presents opportunities to acknowledge the good and transform momentary experiences into lasting improvements [2]. In short, paying attention to the positive things that happen in everyday life fosters an appreciation of what is going well [3], which, in turn, helps people feel happier and more content [2]. With this in mind, it seems clear that we should find ways to deliberately pay attention to the good things that happen, regardless of how small or insignificant they appear on the surface.

The G.L.A.D technique [4] can help people notice positive experiences already present in their daily lives. While this approach is helpful for individuals stuck in rumination or negative thinking, it is also a simple yet powerful tool for anyone with a desire to cultivate more happiness, positivity, and joy in their lives [4].

The G.L.A.D. technique involves four key elements: **G**ratITUDE, **L**earning, **A**ccomplishment, and **D**elight. Each of these elements helps turn attention away from negative thoughts and toward positive experiences that often go unnoticed or overlooked [4]. This exercise will help clients use the G.L.A.D. technique to challenge negative thinking and increase subjective happiness by becoming more aware of the positive things that happen every day.



Author

This exercise was adapted by Elaine Houston from The G.L.A.D. Technique by Donald Altman.



Goal

This exercise aims to help clients understand the G.L.A.D. technique so they can challenge negative thinking and increase subjective happiness by becoming more aware of the positive things that happen around them daily.



Advice

- Challenging negative thinking and becoming more aware of positive experiences takes time and practice. As such, clients should try to make the G.L.A.D. technique part of their daily routine and complete the exercise at the end of the day.
- Clients can store completed worksheets together (perhaps in a folder or journal) and reflect on past positive experiences from time to time. Revisiting their writings in this way will serve as a reminder of the everyday good things around them.
- Clients should try to notice different positive things related to gratitude, learning, accomplishment, and delight each day.



References

1. Vaish, A., Grossmann, T., & Woodward, A. (2008). Not all emotions are created equal: The negativity bias in social-emotional development. *Psychological Bulletin*, 134, 383.
2. Hanson, R. (2013). *Hardwiring happiness: The Practical science of reshaping your brain and your life*. Random House.
3. Alberini C. M. (2010). Long-term memories: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *Cerebrum: The Dana Forum on Brain Science*, 21.
4. Altman, D. (2014). *The mindfulness toolbox: 50 practical tips, tools & handouts for anxiety, depression, stress & pain*. PESI Publishing & Media.



The G.L.A.D. Technique

People tend to focus on the negative aspects of life. This is known as negativity bias. While this is something everyone does to varying degrees, it can significantly affect happiness. One way to counteract negativity bias and promote happiness is to pay attention to the positive experiences you have each day.

Even though good things happen every day, it is easy to overlook or disregard them. The G.L.A.D. technique will help you notice those good things and, in turn, increase happiness.

This exercise will help you understand the G.L.A.D. technique and guide you through the process so that you can become more aware of the positive things that occur every day but tend to go unnoticed.

Step 1: Understanding the G.L.A.D. technique

The G.L.A.D technique involves four key areas:

GratITUDE,
Learning,
Accomplishment, and
Delight

Let us look at the four areas in more detail.

G: Gratitude

The essence of gratitude is thankfulness and appreciation. Practicing gratitude will help you notice the good you experience every day. The more you practice gratitude, the easier it becomes. Gratitude does not have to involve life-changing, transformative events. You can feel grateful for basic things, like having food, water, and a roof over your head.

L: Learning

Every day is full of opportunities to learn something new. This could be something you learned about yourself or your loved ones, a fun fact, or gaining a new perspective on something. It can be absolutely anything you didn't know yesterday but know today. In short, almost everything you do presents an opportunity to learn something you didn't know before.

A: Accomplishment

While many people think about accomplishments in terms of long-term, major life goals, in reality, they do not have to be something life-changing or extraordinary. An accomplishment can be an ordinary everyday thing, like getting enough sleep, staying hydrated, or paying a bill on time. Even completing a small task on your to-do list is an achievement.



D: Delight

Delight is about experiencing joy - even if it is just momentary. As with the other elements of the G.L.A.D. technique, you can find delight in simple, everyday things. For example, laughing with friends, a stranger holding a door open for you, or eating a slice of your favorite cake - anything that made you smile.

By paying attention to these four elements throughout your day, the GLAD technique will help you cultivate a more positive mindset that will help you feel happier and more content.

Step 2: Gratitude

Now that you better understand the G.L.A.D. technique, think about something you are grateful for today. This can be something as simple as a nice cup of coffee in the morning, a supportive friend, or having a roof over your head. There are always things around you to be grateful for.

What is one thing you are grateful for today? Take some time to think back over your day, and when you are ready, write your answer in the G.L.A.D. worksheet in the space labeled *'Today, I am grateful for.'*

Step 3: Learning

In this step, you will think about something you learned today. This can be absolutely anything you know now that you didn't know yesterday. For example, something you learned about yourself or another person, a fun fact, or new knowledge you gained.

What is one thing you learned today? Write your answer in the G.L.A.D. worksheet in the space labeled *'Today, I learned.'*

Step 4: Accomplishment

You will now think about something you accomplished today. While achieving something significant is great, your accomplishment does not have to be major or life-changing. Getting up on time, walking a kilometer, or building flat-pack furniture are all accomplishments that you should be proud of.

What is one thing you accomplished today? Write your answer in the G.L.A.D. worksheet in the space labeled *'Today, I accomplished.'*

Step 5: Delight

Finally, you will think about what delighted you today. This could make you smile or feel joy (even if it was just for a moment). You might experience delight from a conversation, hearing a bird sing, or seeing a beautiful flower, for example.

What is one thing that delighted you today? Write your answer in the G.L.A.D. worksheet in the space labeled *'Today, I was delighted by...'*



Step 6: Repeat

Learning to notice the good things that happen every day takes time, and to get the most out of this exercise, you should complete the G.L.A.D. technique every day. Below, you will find some tips and advice that will help you include the technique in your daily routine.

- You can set aside just a few minutes each evening to think about and record your G.L.A.D. experiences. It may be helpful to link this with an existing habit. For example, you might prefer to complete your G.L.A.D. worksheet just before you go to bed or after you have dinner each day.
- Keep your completed worksheets together in a folder (in a visible location) so they can be completed easily every day. Storing your writings together will also make it easier to revisit and reflect on the good things surrounding you. Alternatively, write about your G.L.A.D. experiences in a daily journal or diary.
- No matter when or how you choose to complete the exercise, the important thing is to write everything down and reflect on your experiences.
- While the G.L.A.D. technique should be completed every day, it is not the end of the world if you forget from time to time. In such instances, pick up the practice again the next day. With time, the G.L.A.D. technique will become second nature, and you will be less likely to forget.

Step 7: Reflection

- How did it feel to focus your attention on positive aspects of your day?
- What insights have you gained from paying attention to positive experiences?
- What effects did the G.L.A.D. technique have on you?
- In what ways did the G.L.A.D. technique help you become more aware of the positive things around you?
- Now that you are familiar with the G.L.A.D. technique, what would you say are the main benefits of using it in your day-to-day life?



Appendix A: G.L.A.D. Worksheet

G.L.A.D. Gratitude - Learning - Accomplishment - Delight
Today, I am grateful for:
Today, I learned:
Today, I accomplished:
Today, I was delighted by:



Appendix B: Completed example

G.L.A.D. Gratitude - Learning - Accomplishment - Delight	
Today, I am grateful for:	the beautiful sunrise I saw on my way to work this morning.
Today, I learned:	that the International Space Station travels 5 miles per second and circles the world every 90 minutes.
Today, I accomplished:	preparing and cooking a healthy meal for my family.
Today, I was delighted by:	the delicious coffee I had on my morning break.