

The Reverse Bucket List Guide

A calm, 15-minute practice for gratitude, confidence, and resilience — built entirely from things you have already done.

What is a Reverse Bucket List?

A traditional bucket list points forward at everything you haven't done yet. It can be motivating — and quietly exhausting. A Reverse Bucket List points backward. It is a written record of the moments, relationships, and small acts of courage that already belong to you.

Nothing on it is aspirational. Everything on it is evidence.

Why it works

- Gratitude. Naming what you already have shifts attention away from what's missing.
- Confidence. Written proof of past effort is far more persuasive than memory alone.
- Resilience. On hard days, a list of things you survived is a practical resource.
- Perspective. Ordinary moments turn out to carry most of the meaning.

How to write yours (15 minutes)

- 1 Find a quiet 15 minutes and something warm to drink.
- 2 Set a timer for 10 minutes and write without editing. Quantity first.

- 3 Use the prompts on the next page whenever you stall.
- 4 Group entries into themes: Moments, People, Impact.
- 5 Read it back slowly. Add one line about why each entry mattered.
- 6 Keep it somewhere you'll see it, and add to it monthly.

30 reflective prompts

Answer any that catch you. Skip the rest.

- What's something you're quietly proud of from the last year?
- What did you overcome as a child that shaped you?
- What's the hardest thing you've ever finished?
- Who have you helped when it cost you something?
- What skill did you teach yourself?
- What fear did you act in spite of?
- What place did you travel to that changed you?
- What have you made with your hands?
- What friendship have you kept alive across distance?
- What did you say no to, and were right about?
- When did you apologise first?
- What tradition have you kept going?
- What did you build at work that outlasted you?
- What have you forgiven?
- What did you recover from — physically or emotionally?
- Who told you that you changed their day?
- What did you read that rearranged your thinking?
- When were you brave in a room full of people?
- What did you rescue, repair, or restore?
- What have you grown — a plant, a team, a person?
- What's a meal you cooked that people still mention?

- What did you give away without being asked?
- What habit did you actually keep?
- When did you choose the harder, better option?
- Who did you sit with when they were struggling?
- What did you learn from a failure you're no longer ashamed of?
- What have you celebrated well?
- What have you carried for someone else?
- What did you start that others continued?
- What would your ten-year-old self be impressed by?

A starter list to borrow from

Examples from real Reverse Bucket Lists — use them as scaffolding, then replace them with your own.

Moments

- Ran my first 5k without stopping.
- Took a solo train trip and liked my own company.
- Finished a difficult book I nearly abandoned.
- Learned to swim at 41.

People

- Learned to make my grandmother's bread.
- Stayed friends with someone for 25 years.
- Sat with a friend through the worst week of their life.
- Raised a child who is kind.

Impact

- Planted a tree that now shades a footpath.
- Trained someone who took my job and did it better.
- Volunteered every winter for six years.
- Gave the talk that made one person change direction.

Your turn

Write ten. Not the impressive ten — the true ten.