

Counterfactual Gratitude Questions

Core “mental subtraction” questions

1. What’s something important in your life this year that almost didn’t happen?
2. What happened this year that could easily *not* have happened?
3. What’s something good in your life that you nearly missed out on?
4. What would your year have looked like if X hadn’t happened when it did?
5. What opportunity or moment almost slipped by unnoticed but made a difference?

Interpersonal counterfactual questions

6. Who is someone whose involvement wasn’t guaranteed, but their presence changed your year?
7. Who showed up for you in a way they didn’t have to?
8. Who made a difference in your life this year—where, if they hadn’t stepped in, things would look very different?
9. Which relationship this year almost didn’t exist, deepen, or rekindle?
10. Who offered a kindness or challenge that shifted something for you—and could easily not have happened?

Small / ordinary counterfactual questions

11. What’s a small, ordinary thing you’d miss immediately if it disappeared tomorrow?
12. What routine or ritual in your life would leave a surprising hole if it vanished?
13. What part of your everyday environment do you take for granted but would feel lost without?

Challenge-driven counterfactual questions

14. What challenge this year ended up creating something good—and what if that challenge had never pushed you?
15. What setback forced a shift that you’re now grateful for?
16. Which difficulty turned out to be a necessary doorway to something better?

Luck / contingency questions

17. What piece of luck or timing benefitted you this year, and what if the timing had been different?
18. What thing in your life depends on a chain of events that easily could have gone another way?
19. What coincidence or “near miss” contributed to something you now value?

Identity / meaning questions

20. What part of who you became this year traces back to something that almost didn’t happen?
21. What new skill, mindset, or role emerged only because of a fragile moment?

Future-facing counterfactuals

22. What are you grateful for now because you know how different things could have been?
23. What upcoming possibility are you grateful for because earlier contingencies lined up just right?