

The reasons gratitude is great and the ways to practice it

[Life](#)



Introduction

Gratitude is the key to a happy life that we hold in our hands, because if we are not grateful, then no matter how much we have we will not be happy because we will always want to have something else or something more. Gratitude is an emotion expressing appreciation for what one has. It is a recognition of value independent of monetary worth. Spontaneously generated from within, it is an affirmation of goodness.

Research shows that people differ in the degree to which they are inclined to experience and express gratitude. As a result, gratitude is said to exist both as a temporary feeling and as a dispositional trait. In both cases, gratitude involves a process of recognizing, first, that one has obtained a positive outcome and, second, that there is an external source for that good outcome.

A social emotion, gratitude strengthens relationships. Its roots run deep in evolutionary history — emanating from the survival value of helping others and being helped in return. Studies show that there are specific areas of the brain that are involved in experiencing and expressing gratitude.

Gratitude is a spontaneous feeling but, increasingly, research demonstrates its value as a practice — that is, making conscious efforts to count one's blessings. Studies show that people can deliberately cultivate gratitude—and there important social and personal benefits to doing so.

How Can We Practice Gratitude?

We cannot be grateful for all that a given moment brings us; yet, in any given moment, we can be grateful for something. The gift within the gift of any given moment is opportunity. In order to practice gratitude we have to put little stop signs into our daily life.

Gratitude starts with noticing the goodness in one's life.

A materialistic culture that encourages constant wanting and sees possessions as the source of happiness is not the most fertile ground for gratitude.

While gratitude is a social emotion and expressions of gratitude to others compound the benefits, the benefits obtain whether or not the feeling is communicated to or reciprocated by another person.

Here are some ways to foster gratitude:

1. Keep a journal of or in some way note big and little joys of daily life.
2. Write down 'three good things'—identify three things that have gone well for you and identify the cause.
3. Write thank you notes to others.
4. Think about people who have inspired you and what about them was most significant.
5. Engage in 'mental subtraction.' Imagine what your life would be like if some positive event had not occurred.

Grateful Living

Grateful living is important in the world because in our constant pursuit of more and better we can easily lose sight of the riches that lay right in front of us and within us.

Grateful living is a way of life which asks us to notice all that is already present and abundant - from the tiniest things of beauty to the grandest of our blessings - and in so doing, to take nothing for granted. We can learn to focus our attention on, and acknowledge, that life is a gift. Even in the most challenging times, living gratefully makes us aware of, and available to, the opportunities that are always available; opportunities to learn and grow, and to extend ourselves with care and compassion to others.

Grateful Living is supported by daily practices, tools, habits of mind and behaviors that can be learned, translated and applied to many aspects of our lives. It is also nourished in community and in relationship. Small, grateful acts every day can uplift us, make a difference for others, and help change the world.

A Golden Key To Happiness

I think there is a robust association between higher levels of gratitude and wellbeing, including protection from stress and depression, more fulfilling relationships, better sleep and greater resilience. Simple exercises that people can do on their own - such as spending two weeks writing a daily list of three things for which they are grateful have been found to increase life satisfaction decrease worry and improve body image, with the beneficial effects lasting for up to six months. Gratitude was one of the most powerful

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variables that personality psychologists could find when it came to predicting wellbeing, over and above most known factors, from wealth and health to other personality traits such as optimism. It is possible to feel grateful toward loved ones, colleagues, animals, mother nature, and life in general. The emotion generates a climate of positivity that both reaches inward and extends outward. Psychologists find that, over time, feeling grateful boosts happiness and fosters both physical and psychological health, even among those already struggling with mental health problems. Studies show that practicing gratitude curbs the use of words expressing negative emotions and shifts inner attention away from such negative emotions as resentment and envy, minimizing the possibility of ruminating over them. Further, the beneficial effects snowball over time. Brain scans of people assigned a task that stimulates expression of gratitude show lasting changes in the prefrontal cortex that heighten sensitivity to future experiences of gratitude. The emotion literally pays itself forward.

The Power Of Gratitude

If I could offer you a magic potion that would make you happier, healthier, more optimistic and more productive, and tell you that potion would cost nothing and will require very little effort to use, would you be interested?

Let me ask the question differently.

If this potion existed would you want some?

Of course you would! Unfortunately, I don't have a potion that will do these things. But each of us has something even better than a potion that will do all of those things and more...

Gratitude

Science tells us that an 'attitude of gratitude' is a good health choice. Being more grateful more often makes us happier and more optimistic. But gratitude also adds to the bottom line - in very real ways. And the best news about gratitude is that it requires little time and no money.

Here are five reasons gratitude improves your productivity and results:

Gratitude attracts what we want. The universal law of attraction says that we will attract into our life the things we think about and focus on.

Since this is true, wouldn't you want more of what you are thankful for? (I think I know the answer to that!) Remember that when you are consciously aware of your blessings, and are grateful for them, you are focusing more clearly on what you do want in your life - and are attracting more of those things into your life.

Gratitude improves relationships. We learn the importance of saying 'thank you' as little children. We are taught that habit because it is 'good manners.' This childhood lesson is extremely powerful.

Think about those people that you know who are most appreciative of you - and let you know it. How do you feel about them? Does their appreciation positively impact your relationship with them? Of course it does! Be grateful

for people, their contributions, their talents and their actions – and make sure you let them know how you feel. Gratitude reduces negativity. It is hard to be negative about your situation when you are thinking about things for which you are grateful. One of the fastest ways to improve your mood or outlook is to count your blessings.

Gratitude improves problem solving skills. Too often we look at problem solving with a very jaded view. ‘ Something is wrong. We have barriers in our way. Then, we have to put in effort to fix it.’

Conversely, when we think about what we are grateful for we open our minds up to new possibilities and connections. We also enter a problem solving situation with a perspective of improvement and opportunity rather than challenge or issue.

Gratitude helps us learn. Every dark cloud has a silver lining. Behind every problem lies an opportunity. Being grateful for our situation – even if we don’t like everything about it – allows us to be thankful for the opportunity to learn something new.

That’s Fine, But How?

At this point you may be thinking, OK, sounds great, but how can I really be more grateful, more often?

It’s really very easy.

Let’s practice right now.

1. Make a list of five things you are grateful for right now. These can be big things (like your family) or little things (like the fact that someone held the door open for you this morning). This can be a mental list or written down. Do it now.
2. Reflect on your list and allow yourself to feel good about these things.
3. If there is a person you can thank or show your appreciation to, do that now too (a quick call or email is a good start!).

You can do this exercise anytime, and you don't have to stop at five things. In fact, it is a great idea to keep a running list in your Journal, planner or notebook - this way you can return to your list anytime you wish, reinforcing your gratitude.

But at any moment you can make a list, bask in those thoughts, and share that thankfulness with others.

You've probably thought of being thankful as a good thing to do or the right thing to do. But now hopefully you see it can be even more powerful than 'right.'

Gratitude is an attitude. Gratitude is a choice. And gratitude is a habit. When we consciously practice being grateful for the people, situations and resources around us we begin to attract better relationships and results. The habit will be strengthened as you make the choice each day.