

Gratitude and Appreciation

We all have the ability and opportunity to cultivate gratitude and appreciation. Rather than complain about the things you think you deserve, take a few moments to focus on all that you *have*. Developing an “attitude of gratitude and appreciation” is one of the simplest ways to improve your satisfaction with life.

7 Scientifically Proven Benefits of Gratitude

1. **Gratitude opens the door to more relationships.** Not only does saying “thank you” constitute good manners, but showing appreciation can help you win new friends, according to a 2014 study published in *Emotion*. The study found that thanking a new acquaintance makes them more likely to seek an ongoing relationship. So whether you thank a stranger for holding the door or send a thank-you note to that colleague who helped you with a project, acknowledging other people’s contributions can lead to new opportunities.
2. **Gratitude improves physical health.** Grateful people experience fewer aches and pains and report feeling healthier than other people, according to a 2012 study published in *Personality and Individual Differences*. Not surprisingly, grateful people are also more likely to take care of their health. They exercise more often and are more likely to attend regular check-ups, which is likely to contribute to further longevity.
3. **Gratitude improves psychological health.** Gratitude reduces a multitude of toxic emotions, from envy and resentment to frustration and regret. Robert Emmons, a leading gratitude researcher, has conducted multiple studies on the link between gratitude and well-being. His research confirms that gratitude effectively increases happiness and reduces depression.
4. **Gratitude enhances empathy and reduces aggression.** Grateful people are more likely to behave in a prosocial manner, even when others behave less kindly, according to a 2012 study by the University of Kentucky. Study participants who ranked higher on gratitude scales were less likely to retaliate against others, even when given negative feedback. They experienced more sensitivity and empathy toward other people and a decreased desire to seek revenge.
5. **Grateful people sleep better.** Writing in a gratitude journal improves sleep, according to a 2011 study published in *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*. Spend just 15 minutes jotting down a few grateful sentiments before bed, and you may sleep better and longer.
6. **Gratitude improves self-esteem.** A 2014 study published in the *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* found that gratitude increased athletes’ self-esteem, an essential component to optimal performance. Other studies have shown that gratitude reduces social comparisons. Rather than becoming resentful toward people who have more money or better jobs—a major factor in reduced self-esteem—grateful people are able to appreciate other people’s accomplishments.
7. **Gratitude increases mental strength.** For years, research has shown gratitude not only reduces stress, but it may also play a major role in overcoming trauma. A 2006 study published in *Behavior Research and Therapy* found that Vietnam War veterans with higher levels of gratitude experienced lower rates of post-traumatic stress disorder. A 2003 study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* found that gratitude was a major contributor to resilience following the terrorist attacks on September 11. Recognizing all that you have to be thankful for—even during the worst times—fosters resilience.

Available from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/what-mentally-strong-people-dont-do/201504/7-scientifically-proven-benefits-gratitude>

Below are two simple but powerful exercises which can assist building gratitude and appreciation by enhancing realistic optimism: reflecting on the good that has happened to you over the past 24 hours and reflecting on what you are really grateful for and why.

In the past 24hrs, what has happened that has been good?	In the past 24hr, what have you been grateful for, and why?

The benefits are profound: people who do these exercises regularly report enhanced optimism, positivity, energy and connectedness. Whilst no-one chooses to experience tough times and adversity, successfully dealing with adversity does have an upside. Personal growth and development occurs most when one is in unfamiliar territory, when comfort levels are breached, and when one is out of one's depth and struggling.

Adversity creates such an environment, and a response based on resilience enables growth and development, and even life-enhancing change, to take place. The personal benefit for staff in being resilient is that they have inner strength and resourcefulness to absorb "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" and live a joyful life. In this context, resilience and appreciation is the life-force through which one can overcome adversity and strive towards self actualisation.

Staying flexible. Gratitude and appreciation involves maintaining flexibility and balance in your life as you deal with stressful circumstances and traumatic events. This happens in several ways, including:

- Letting yourself experience strong emotions, and also realising times when you may need to avoid experiencing them in order to continue functioning
- Stepping forward and taking action to deal with your problems, meeting the demands of daily living, and also stepping back to rest and re-energise yourself
- Spending time with loved ones to gain support and encouragement, and also nurturing yourself
- Relying on others, and also relying on yourself
- Appreciate the little things in life that bring your pleasure or make you smile
- Be kind to yourself

Here are eight words and statements below that can be practised every day or worked upon to improve gratitude and appreciation:

- **Purpose:** Have a clear and valued sense of purpose
- **Planning:** Don't ignore your problems. Plan and take action
- **Determination:** Focus on a goal. Access what stops you achieving?
- **Positive:** Be positive, realistic and flexible to achieve your goals.
- **Self-awareness:** How well do you know yourself?
- **Values:** What energises you, and what drains your energy?
- **Self-management:** Manage yourself and your time
- **Relationships:** Get connected – develop a positive support network

Controlling negative feelings is the first step; generating positive feelings are needed for gratitude and appreciation. Positive feelings are effectively created by connecting to one's purpose and meaning in life, using one's innate strengths and reaching out to others.

In addition, there are two exercises we have found useful in generating genuine positive feelings. The first exercise involves reflecting daily on three good things about you and three things you want to develop.

Three good things about you	Three things you want to develop

The benefits of writing a journal

Journaling helps control your symptoms and improve your mood by: Helping **you** prioritize problems, fears, and concerns. Tracking any symptoms day-to-day so that **you can** recognize triggers and learn ways to better control them. Providing an opportunity for positive self-talk and identifying negative thoughts and emotions.

Writing a journal of the best possible outcomes for yourself in the future using topics such as loving relationships, career, finances, spirituality, health, hobbies and so on. Both exercises typically result in enhanced feelings of excitement and joy in living a life of involvement and potential.

Journaling is a life-changing habit that:

- empowers you to live true to yourself
- teaches you to make more intentional choices
- grounds you when you feel overwhelmed or out of control

Getting started

There is never a wrong or right way to start writing a journal. It very much depends on how much time you have each day. However, by just spending a few minutes at the beginning

and the end of the day very quickly you will start to see the benefits.

I follow a very simple process using The 6 minute Diary published by 'createurbestself'.

It take 6 minutes per day morning and evening.

But you don't have to buy a diary you can make one yourself looking at key points:

Morning

- I'm grateful for.....
- This is how I will make today great
- A positive affirmation fo the day

Evening

- My good deed today
- How I will improve
- Great things I experienced today

You can also keep track of moods, emotions and habits that you may want to change.

There are 100's of examples of journaling on the website and finding one that works for you and fits with your daily life is most important.

www.premierlifeskills.co.uk