

Tools and Benefits of Gratitude

Nov 25, 2018

Scripture:

Give thanks in everything

Phil 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

1Thes 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Give thanks for all things.

Eph 5:18-20 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

Give thanks in whatever you do.

Col 3:15-17 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Scientific proofs

Thinking about all you have to appreciate can boost your happiness and your overall sense of well-being, according to psychologists. (It helps explain why Thanksgiving scores so high among American holidays. It's topped only by Christmas, according to one recent poll.)

Study from the University of Pennsylvania

Feeling and expressing gratitude can make you happy in the moment, just think back to the joy you felt the last time a friend helped you out or your partner cooked a gourmet dinner. There is a growing mound of evidence shows that giving thanks can also have a lasting effect on your mood. A study from the University of Pennsylvania found that people who wrote and delivered a heartfelt thank-you letter felt happier for a full month afterwards. The same researchers discovered that writing down three positive events each day for a week kept happiness levels high for up to six months. The effects of gratitude last longer than you think

Train Your Brain for Gratitude

Whether or not these attitudes come to you naturally, paying attention to life's positives can train you to see more and more of them, which will help you learn to be more grateful. You might feel blessed that good weather allowed you to get out for an afternoon run, that a stranger lent a helping hand, that you made it to the bus on time, or that your kids offered to do the dishes. Acknowledging these things on paper, with words or even in your thoughts will help you cultivate an attitude of gratitude and with it, a boost in happiness that will last year-round.

(from <https://www.happify.com/hd/cultivate-an-attitude-of-gratitude/>)

According to researchers at Eastern Washington University

There are four primary characteristics of grateful people. People who are the most grateful) tend to:

1. Feel a sense of abundance in their lives.
2. Appreciate the contributions of others to their well-being.
3. Recognize and enjoy life's small pleasures.
4. Acknowledge the importance of experiencing and expressing gratitude.

Gratitude has many benefits

Emotional - Gratitude improves psychological health

More good feeling
More relaxed
More resilient
Less envious
Happier memories

Personality - Gratitude improves self-esteem

Less materialistic
Less self-centered
More optimistic
More spiritual

Health - Gratitude improves physical health

Improved sleep
Less sick
Longevity
Increased energy
More exercise

Social - Gratitude opens the door to more relationships.

More social
Healthier marriages
Kinder
More friendships
Deeper relationships

Career

Better management
Improved networking
Goal achievement
Improved decision-making
Increased productivity

Gratitude increases mental strength.

Gratitude enhances empathy and reduces aggression.

Tools for Thankfulness

“Life moves pretty fast. If you don’t stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.”
(Ferris Bueller)

1. Don’t be picky, appreciate everything.

Gratitude doesn’t have to be saved for the “big” things in life. The habit of being grateful starts with appreciating every good thing in life and recognizing that there is nothing too little to be thankful for.

Even if it is as simple as appreciating the clear weather or how quickly your mailman delivered your mail last Friday, don’t leave anything out when practicing gratitude.

2. Find gratitude in your challenges

Gratitude is not only about being thankful for positive experiences. In fact, sometimes thinking about negative or difficult situations can help you to remember what you are truly thankful for.

Look at some of your past experiences and think about how they have helped shape you into the person you are today.

3. Practice mindfulness

Daily think about five to ten things you are grateful for. Picture these things in your mind and allow yourself to feel the feeling of gratitude in your body. Doing this every day will rewire your brain to be naturally more grateful, and you’ll start feeling happier after every session.

It will only take eight weeks of practicing gratitude for you to start experiencing changed brain patterns. As a result, it becomes easier to be grateful and you will have greater empathy and happiness.

4. Keep a gratitude journal

After practicing mindfulness, write down your positive thoughts.

By writing down your positive thoughts helps you to better focus on being grateful. While you are putting the pen to paper, you have no choice but to consciously think about the words you are writing without other distracting, ungrateful thoughts.

By writing down positive things that have happen, you become better at recognizing the good in your life, which naturally helps you feel more grateful and thankful more often.

Of course, the actual goal isn't to have a notebook full of your declarations of gratitude, but rather to make gratitude a default feeling.

5. Volunteer

For many people, the key to having more gratitude is to give back to others in their local community. Not only will it make you more grateful for the things that you may take for granted, but studies have shown that volunteering for the purpose of helping others increases our own well-being, and thus our ability to have more gratitude.

University of Pennsylvania professor, Martin Seligman, supports this theory with his research in *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*. After testing all kinds of variables that help improve our well-being, he found that volunteering is the single most reliable way to momentarily increase your well-being. In other words: helping others helps you!

6. Express yourself

Sometimes it's not enough to simply keep your gratitude to yourself. You can increase your feelings of gratitude by expressing it. You can cultivate gratitude by writing thank-you notes.

Soul Pancake, a group that works to discover the "science of happiness," ran an experiment where they encouraged people to write a letter to a person, they were grateful for. By itself, this exercise increased their levels of happiness from 2 to 4%. However, when the same people made a phone call to the person, they were thankful for to express their gratitude directly, happiness levels jumped from 4% to 19%.

Not only does expressing your gratitude for someone make their day a little brighter, but it can do wonders for increasing your own levels of gratitude and happiness in the long run

7. Spend time with loved ones

If you're struggling with feeling the gratitude in the moment, go spend time with your friends and family. Of course, it will help you grow closer to them and strengthen your relationship, but it will also give you a chance to practice your acts of gratitude on people that you care about.

Start small if you are having trouble finding ways to support your friends and family. For instance, why don't you make sure you're listening intently the next time someone shares a story with you instead of waiting for your own chance to speak? Or start a conversation with a difficult member of the family by complimenting their new shoes or hair-cut.

8. Improve your happiness in other areas of your life

Being grateful can make you happy but being happy can also make you grateful. There are plenty of other ways to get your mood up, including exercising or participating in a hobby you enjoy.

Once you are feeling the endorphins flow, showing gratitude will become even easier and you'll start to be able to make list after list of all the things in your life you're thankful for.

Gratitude is a choice

You have the choice between gratitude and resentment. If you chose resentment, you drive out gratitude. If you choose gratitude you drive out resentment, For the benefit of your body, your brain, your family and everything else in your life, choose gratitude - and be grateful for the choice.