

THANKS! How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier

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Overview

Gratitude is the act of acknowledging and appreciating the positive things in your life. It is the social glue which underlies relationships, and it has real tangible benefits such as improved physical health and psychological resistance to stress. This book will teach you how to be more grateful and how to reframe negative situations to practice your gratitude. Gratitude is far more than an emotion – it's a state of mind with a whole plethora of benefits. Read on, and watch as your life turns around when you learn how to appreciate all the good things!

*"It may sound simplistic,
but the evidence cannot be ignored:
if you want to sleep more soundly,
count blessings, not sheep."*

Chapter 1: The New Science of Gratitude

"Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others." – Cicero, Roman philosopher

There is ample scientific evidence that regularly feeling grateful leads to significant psychological, physical, and interpersonal benefits. Even those who just spent time around grateful people appeared to get a gratitude "contact high". Great religious leaders, philosophers, theologians, and authors have written about gratitude for centuries, and now science gets its turn.

People have an intuitive grasp of gratitude. It's natural to appreciate the effort someone went to give you a gift. Scientifically, it has been described as an attitude, emotion, mood, moral virtue, habit, motive, personality trait, and even sometimes a coping mechanism.

The word *gratitude* descends from the Latin *gratia*, meaning "favor," and *gratus* meaning "pleasing." Derivatives of these words describe something pleasing, kind, or fulfilling – it *feels* good to be grateful. Gratitude comes in 2 stages: acknowledging the good in your life, and recognizing that gratitude is outwardly, not inwardly, focused.

Gratitude also requires effort. Philosopher Martin Heidegger said, "*Denken ist Danken*," or, "Thinking is thanking." The French expression "*Je suis reconnaissant*" means I intellectually recognize and emotionally appreciate something.

Even negative events can be appreciated if they are properly recognized, or "*re-cognized*". Gratitude requires being thoughtful but not overintellectualizing; at heart, it's a feeling. Curiously, gratitude usually feels freely gifted instead of being earned – while not everyone deserves to feel grateful, everyone is eligible.

When asked to pray before a meal, Bart Simpson said, "Dear God, we paid for all this stuff ourselves, so thanks for nothing." Bart may be right, but he missed the point. A grateful person recognizes the interconnectedness of all, and is thankful for the factors outside their control. You can be both proud of your achievements and grateful for those who helped.

Grateful people are happier, healthier, more adaptable under stress, and even feel closer to God. Gratitude is, in a way, religious: a worship of a divine feeling that gives life a meaning. Psychologist George Simmel calls gratitude "the moral memory of mankind."

Chapter 2: Gratitude And The Psyche

According to writer G.K Chesterton, life will continue to surprise us in gracious ways if we can control our tendencies towards comparison, entitlement, and intoxicating independence. One study comparing the happiness of lottery winners to those with life-altering spinal injuries showed that the latter were more grateful than expected, and the former were no happier than a control group.

This is due to a happiness *set point*, a default baseline level of happiness each person regresses to regardless of their situation. While events such as marriage, divorce, children, a new job, or moving may shift your happiness momentarily, you will inevitably return to your set point. This is known as *hedonic adaption*.



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