

GRATITUDE

Gratitude is a way for people to appreciate what they have instead of always reaching for something new in the hopes it will make them happier, or thinking they can't feel satisfied until every physical and material need is met. Gratitude helps people refocus on what they have instead of what they lack. And, although it may feel contrived at first, this mental state grows stronger with use and practice.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (KJ21): In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Ephesians 5:18-20 (ASV): Be filled with the Spirit; speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.

Psalm 136:26 (AMP): Give thanks to the God of heaven, for His lovingkindness (graciousness, mercy, compassion) endures forever.

Psalm 106:1 (BRG): Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Psalm 107:1 (CJB): Give thanks to Adonai; for he is good, for his grace continues forever

Colossians 4:2 (DARBY): Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving

Gratitude may be one of the most overlooked tools that we all have access to every day. Cultivating gratitude doesn't cost any money and it certainly doesn't take much time, but the benefits are enormous. Research reveals gratitude can have these seven benefits:

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 you send a quick thank-you note to that co-worker 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 they 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 with their doctors, which is likely to contribute to further longevity.

3. Gratitude improves psychological health. Gratitude reduces a multitude of toxic emotions, ranging from envy and resentment to frustration and regret. Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D., 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 kind, 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 athlete's self-esteem, which is 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 – which is 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 you have to be thankful for – even during the worst times of your life – fosters resilience.

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

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