

Creating an Attitude of Gratitude

There's a saying that "it's not happy people who are thankful. It is thankful people who are happy." Gratitude is a simple, yet powerful practice that can promote well-being.

When is the last time someone thanked you, or showed appreciation for you or something you did for them? How did you feel? Studies show that employees whose managers thank them for their work may feel motivated to work harder. Practicing gratitude, by being appreciative or thankful, can have a positive impact on your well-being. It's linked to stronger connections with others, happiness, and even creative thinking. Gratitude is also a practice that supports resiliency, or the ability to "bounce back" from adversity and hardships in life. This might be because being grateful helps you focus on the good in life and the things you have and appreciate, rather than dwelling on what you don't have.

Being Thankful

Practicing gratitude can be done in many ways:

- *Keep a journal.* You could choose to write about something that you appreciate on a regular basis. Or, simply make a note of one or two things that went right today. By starting or ending your day with this exercise, you keep your focus on the good.
- *Say a simple "thank you."* Many of us have countless opportunities each day to express our thanks to others. Did your spouse or child do something to help around the house? Did a coworker help out with a project? Tell them you appreciate it! Not only will you brighten their day, but you might also find that they are even more willing to help out in the future.
- *Write a thank you letter or note.* This could be for a gift or for someone's time—or it could be a simple note of appreciation to someone you care about. Did you get really good service from a customer service representative on the phone or the barista at your local coffee shop? Often, we're quick to complain if something isn't done right or we're dissatisfied, but consider taking the time to recognize a job well done. It will feel good to write it and you just might give someone else a positive little boost in their day, too!
- *Try a "count your blessings" activity, either on your own or with your family.* Take a moment each day to write down at least one thing you are grateful for on a slip of paper. Place the notes in a jar and at the end of the week or month (or anytime you want a reminder), read through all of the positives in your life.

Practicing gratitude can be very simple, but its impact can be powerful! What are you grateful for today?

Sources: Harvard Medical School; RA Emmons and ME McCullough, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 2002;84(2):377-389; RA Sansone and LA Sansone, Psychiatry (Edgemont) 2010;7(11):18-22.