



Positive Pulse

Your monthly dose of advice on healthy living

May 2020

Set Your Attitude to Gratitude



We're back again! True to the name of this newsletter, let's focus on the positive! We'd like you to take a moment and be thankful as we discuss gratitude and its health benefits.

- Gratitude is just another way to express how thankful you are for the good things in your life, but this can mean something

different to everyone.

- There has been much research on gratitude and how it can benefit our everyday life.
- There are many ways to express gratitude, so we've rounded up a list to help you get started.

[And don't forget to listen to our webinars every Tuesday! You can find registrations links and recordings here.](#)



Gratitude Basics

What is Gratitude?

- The word gratitude is derived from the Latin word *gratia*, which means grace, graciousness, or gratefulness (depending on the context).
- Gratitude is a thankful appreciation for what an individual receives, whether tangible or intangible. With gratitude, people acknowledge the goodness in their lives.
- In the process, people usually recognize that the source of that goodness lies at least partially outside themselves.
- As a result, gratitude also helps people connect to something larger than themselves as individuals – whether to other people, nature, or a higher power.

How to Express Gratitude

- People feel and express gratitude in multiple ways. They can apply it to the past (retrieving positive memories and being thankful for elements of childhood or past blessings), the present (not taking good fortune for granted as it comes), and the future (maintaining a hopeful and optimistic attitude).
- Regardless of the inherent or current level of someone's gratitude, it is a quality that individuals can successfully cultivate further.

People are Grateful for Different Things

- Some people focus on the little things (eating your favorite meal, having a good hair day, receiving a nice compliment).
- Other people focus on a wider scope (the health of friends and family, a successful career, feeling part of a group).
- Any combination of big and small things in your life can be reason enough to feel grateful.



SOURCE: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>



Benefits of Gratitude

Gratitude Keeps Your Spirits Up

- Two psychologists, Dr. Robert A. Emmons of the University of California, Davis, and Dr. Michael E. McCullough of the University of Miami, have done much research on gratitude. In one study, they asked all participants to write a few sentences each week, focusing on particular topics.
- One group wrote about things they were grateful for that had occurred during the week. A second group wrote about daily irritations or things that had displeased them. The third wrote about events that had affected them (with no emphasis on them being positive or negative).
- After 10 weeks, those who wrote about gratitude were more optimistic and felt better about their lives. Surprisingly, they also exercised more and had fewer visits to physicians than those who focused on sources of aggravation.

It Makes You Happier

- Another leading researcher in this field, Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman, a psychologist

at the University of Pennsylvania, tested the impact of various positive psychology interventions on 411 people, each compared with a control assignment of writing about early memories.

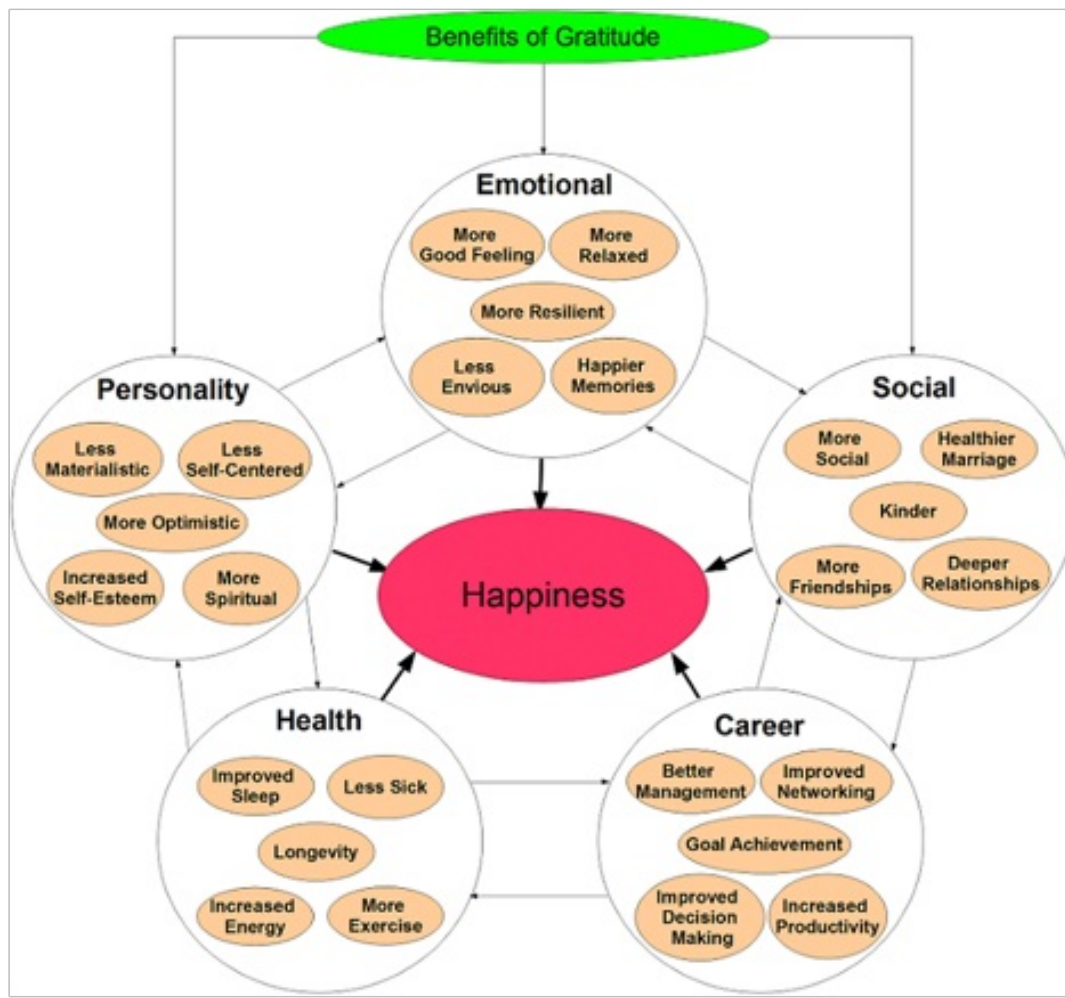
- When their week's assignment was to write and personally deliver a letter of gratitude to someone who had never been properly thanked for his or her kindness, participants immediately exhibited a huge increase in happiness scores. This impact was greater than that from any other intervention, with benefits lasting for a month.
- In positive psychology research, gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness.
- Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships.

Improving Relationships

- A study of couples found that individuals who took time to express gratitude for their partner not only felt more positive toward the other person but also felt more comfortable expressing concerns about their relationship.
- Managers who remember to say "thank you" to people who work for them may find that those employees feel motivated to work harder.
- Researchers at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania randomly divided university fund-raisers into two groups. One group made phone calls to solicit alumni donations in the same way they always had. The second group – assigned to work on a different day – received a pep talk from the director of annual giving, who told the fund-raisers she was grateful for their efforts.
- During the following week, the university employees who heard her message of gratitude made 50% more fund-raising calls than those who did not.

Exceptions

- There are some notable exceptions to the generally positive results in research on gratitude.
- One study found that middle-aged divorced women who kept gratitude journals were no more satisfied with their lives than those who did not.
- Another study found that children and adolescents who wrote and delivered a thank-you letter to someone who made a difference in their lives may have made the other person happier – but did not improve their own well-being.
- This finding suggests that gratitude is an attainment associated with emotional maturity.



SOURCE: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>
<https://www.happierhuman.com/benefits-of-gratitude/>



How to Practice Gratitude

Write a Thank-You Note

- You can make yourself happier and nurture your relationship with another person by writing a thank-you letter expressing your enjoyment and appreciation of that person's impact on your life. Send it, or better yet, deliver and read it in person if possible. Make a habit of sending at least one gratitude letter a month. Once in a while, write one to yourself.
- [Click here for tips on writing a thank you note or letter.](#)

Thank Someone Mentally

- No time to write? It may help just to think about someone who has done something nice for you, and mentally thank the individual.

Keep a Gratitude Journal

- Make it a habit to write down or share with a loved one thoughts about the gifts you've received each day.
- [Try using the NJSAP Gratitude Journal Template.](#)

Count Your Blessings

- Pick a time every week to sit down and reflect on what went right or what you are grateful for. Sometimes it helps to pick a number – such as three to five things – that you will identify each week. As you write, be specific and think about the sensations you felt when something good happened to you.

Pray

- People who are religious can use prayer to cultivate gratitude.

Meditate

- Mindfulness meditation involves focusing on the present moment without judgment. Although people often focus on a word or phrase (such as "peace"), it is also possible to focus on what you're grateful for (the warmth of the sun, a pleasant sound, etc.).
- [Try watching one of our many Meditation videos.](#)

Keeping a Gratitude Box

- Choose a box, and make it appealing by decorating it or adding other personal touches. The idea is to make the box or list special.
- Keep the box or list somewhere where you can see it so that you can use it easily. Put a pen and paper close by, too, so you're all set up to make entries. Perhaps you could even put a special pen in the box itself.
- Record the good things that happen to you and place small objects like ticket stubs, photos, or souvenirs in the box. Spend time regularly reflecting on whoever, or whatever, makes you feel appreciative and grateful.
- Choose a special day to look over the items in your box or revisit when you need a pick-me-up.

Create a Gratitude Trigger

- Gratitude rocks (or stones) act as reminders to be thankful. For example, one use of a gratitude rock is to keep it in your pocket to remind yourself to be grateful.
- Every time you touch the rock, identify something or someone you are grateful for. You can do this once in the morning and once at night.
- It doesn't need to be a rock, it can be any small object you can put in your pocket safely that will serve as a reminder.

Gratitude Charm Bracelet

- Buy a charm bracelet and choose charms or trinkets that are meaningful to you personally and that can serve as a reminder of something you are thankful for.
- You may select a heart to symbolize your romantic relationship, an animal that represents your pet, a sun that represent good weather; anything that holds meaning to you.

Gratitude stroll

- Go for a walk, and set yourself the task of finding how many positive things that you can notice.

[You can find even more examples here!](#)

SOURCE: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>

<https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-messages-letters-lists/>

Let's Stay Healthy and Be Grateful!

We need your help to keep this important information flowing!
Please make a donation to NJSAP now so we can keep you informed in the future.

<https://www.arcnj.org/programs/njsap/donations.html>



Looking to learn more about healthy living?
We can hold a Healthy Lifestyles Workshop at your location! ***In person trainings are not currently available but will resume in the future.**



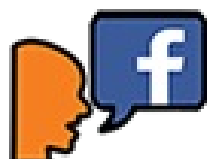
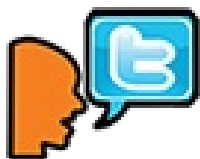
Don't see what you're looking for? We'll make it for you!
 E-mail NJSAP@ArcNJ.org or call 732-749-8514 to schedule a
 training at your location!



The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey

The [Healthy Lifestyles Project \(HLP\)](#) is a program of The Arc of New Jersey and receives funding through a grant awarded by [The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey](#).

For more information on HLP and NJSAP
 follow us on social media!





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Promoting Advocacy and Independence for People
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