

Gratitude

As kids, we are taught to thank others when they give us a gift or make a nice gesture. We learn to thank naturally as a social standard. But how frequently do we communicate gratitude for small daily good things? Do we truly understand what it means to be grateful? How often do we express "thank you" without truthfully feeling thankful?

The Oxford dictionary defines gratitude as "the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness." In other words, Gratitude is a conscious, positive emotion expressed when we're grateful for something tangible or intangible.

Yet, gratitude entails far more than merely being polite. It's a practice that entails recognizing someone else's gesture towards us or the good things in our lives. It involves both the process of identifying the positive and its outcome.

Gratitude is vital for psychological well-being and personal growth.

Harvard Health states: "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."

The Science

Dopamine (a chemical released in the brain that makes you feel good) is unleashed in the brain when someone expresses or receives gratitude. This can be through an action, a verbal message or a gratitude activity.

Dopamine gets produced in two brain regions: the substantia nigra and the ventral tegmental area. The former is concerned with movement and speech, while the latter is concerned with reward. Dopamine is released when a person expresses or receives gratitude, creating a link between the behavior and feeling good. The more a person expresses gratitude, the more dopamine is released.

When expressed regularly, gratitude is a powerful emotion with numerous positive consequences:

- ➔ Increased happiness
- ➔ More satisfaction with life
- ➔ Better physical health
- ➔ Lower levels of cellular inflammation
- ➔ Less likely to experience burnout
- ➔ Encourages the development of patience, humility, and wisdom
- ➔ Positive mood
- ➔ Less materialistic
- ➔ Less fatigue
- ➔ Better sleep
- ➔ Greater resiliency

Expressing gratitude is a simple, quick, and inexpensive everyday intervention that can help reach your nutrition, fitness and wellness goals. There are a number of ways to express gratitude including: Writing thank you letters, verbally telling or texting someone that you are thankful for them or something they have done, meditating, and creating a gratitude journal. We have included a 7 day journal and challenge in the following pages.

Try This 7 day gratitude challenge

It's simple: write down three positive things from your day, big or small, like conquering your deadlift personal best, learning a new delicious breakfast recipe, or finding joy in hanging out with that person who makes you laugh.

After completing this activity for seven days, try to continue without the aid of prompts.

(Print the challenge or edit on your device. If you are using a journal, write down the question and then your answer in your journal.)



Gratitude Challenge: Day 1

One good thing that happened to me today...

Something good that I saw someone do...

Today I had fun when...
