

Health Matters

A Marathon Health Wellness Resource | 2025



Gratitude is the appreciation of what is valuable and meaningful to oneself.

It represents a general state of thankfulness and/or appreciation.

The power of gratitude

About 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 unnatural at first, this mental state grows stronger with use and practice.

Research on gratitude

Many studies support an association between gratitude and an individual's well-being.

Psychologists Dr. Robert A. Emmons of the University of California, Davis, Dr. Michael E. McCullough of the University of

Miami, and Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman, father of "Positive Psychology," along with others have done much of the research on gratitude.

In one study, participants were asked to write a few sentences each week. After 10 weeks, those who wrote about things they appreciated, as opposed to daily irritations or events that affected them, were more optimistic and felt better about their lives. They also exercised more and had fewer visits to physicians than those who focused on sources of irritation.

In another study by researchers at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, managers who remember to say "thank you" to people who work for them found that those employees feel motivated to work

harder. University employees who heard their manager's message of gratitude made 50% more fundraising calls than those who did not.

Benefits of gratitude

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.

Other benefits include:

- Raised satisfaction with life
- Improved sleep quality and duration
- Reduced fatigue
- Strengthened resiliency
- Decreased fear in survivors of cancer

To schedule an appointment or learn more, visit my.marathon.health



Expressing and practicing gratitude

The gratitude journey

People may find ways to feel and express gratitude throughout life.

Past: Retrieving positive memories and being thankful for elements of childhood or past blessings.

Present: Being humble, not taking good fortune for granted.

Future: Maintaining a hopeful and positive attitude.

Regardless of the inherent or current level of someone's gratitude, it's a quality that individuals can successfully develop further.

Ways to practice 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.).

Pray: People who are religious can use prayer to foster gratitude.

At the dinner table: Ask yourself and/or others "What was the best part of your day?" Focusing on the positive part of each day can help reduce envy, facilitate positive emotions, and can make us more resilient.

At bedtime: Ask yourself and/or others "What was your favorite part of your day?"

Ways to express gratitude

Count your blessings: Pick a time every week to sit down and write about your blessings—reflecting 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.

Gratitude jar: Think of one thing that you are grateful for each day and write it down on a slip of paper. Over time, you will find that you have a jar full of myriad reasons to be thankful for what you have and enjoy the life you are living.

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.

Write a thank-you note: You can make yourself happier and nurture your relationship with another person by writing a thank-you letter or email expressing your enjoyment and appreciation of that person's impact on your life.

Sending the letter can increase gratitude. However, just the act of writing one has shown improvements on its own. Write one to yourself!

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.

Sources:

[Gratitude and well-being | PubMed Central](#), accessed 11/3/2024

[Giving thanks can make you happier | Harvard Health Publishing](#), accessed 11/3/2024

[Gratitude influences sleep through the mechanism of pre-sleep cognitions | PubMed](#), Accessed 11/3/2024

[Effects of a randomized gratitude intervention on death-related fear of recurrence in breast cancer survivors | PubMed](#), accessed 11/3/2024

[Counting blessings in early adolescents: An experimental study of gratitude and subjective well-being | ScienceDirect](#), accessed 11/3/2024

[Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life | PsycNET](#), accessed 11/3/2024

Want to learn more?

Make an appointment with your provider to discuss your lifestyle habits.

