



UNLOCK THE SUPERPOWER OF GRATITUDE

Want to feel happier, be healthier and even sleep better? Then start by practicing gratitude every day.

For centuries, various customs and religions have required people to stop and give thanks for the blessings they perceive. It may seem quaint, but science is repeatedly proving that those who can feel grateful for the positives in their lives are healthier, more confident and happier.

People who regularly practice gratitude by taking time to notice and reflect upon the things they're thankful for experience more positive emotions, feel more 'alive', sleep better, express more compassion and kindness, and even have stronger immune systems. You might express gratitude after receiving a promotion at work, but you can also be thankful for something as simple as a delicious piece of pie.

AN APPOINTMENT WITH APPRECIATION



Rites and traditions serve as cues to help us notice and appreciate the good in our lives. Too often we become accustomed to our circumstances and take them for granted. Having a ritual – an opportunity to express gratitude – refocuses our attention on the positives. The more you practice gratitude, the more naturally it will come, even during challenging times.

Research by University of California, Davis psychologist Robert Emmons, shows that simply keeping a gratitude journal – regularly writing brief reflections on moments for which we're thankful – can significantly increase wellbeing and life satisfaction.

A BOOST TO HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

Scientists believe that gratitude improves happiness by displacing negative emotions such as envy, frustration, regret and depression. It is, after all, difficult to feel both grateful and pessimistic at the same time.

Being in a positive mindset also prompts us to make decisions that secure our future, such as protecting our health by being active and eating healthy.

There is also evidence that proves feeling grateful is the key to thriving after traumatic events and can give a person additional mental strength and self-confidence. Expressing gratitude suppresses the stress hormone cortisol, while releasing the feel-good hormones – serotonin, dopamine and oxytocin.



THREE TIPS TO NURTURE GRATITUDE



- 1. Engage in rituals:** This can range from writing in a gratitude journal every night to simply discussing things to be grateful for at dinner.
- 2. Appreciate the here and now:** The trick is to purposefully take moments to do so. Go for a walk somewhere pretty and appreciate it – actively encourage your mind to notice the beautiful weather or flowers. Alternatively, stop in the middle of your day and simply ask yourself to find one thing that you are grateful for at that very moment.
- 3. Show gratitude to others:** Thanking a friend or family member not only makes them feel good, but also makes you aware of the good people you have around you. This means we all have absolutely nothing to lose by simply being a little kinder.

Need to talk to someone? Reach out to your employee health and wellness programme for professional and confidential counselling.

References

Live Happy

The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG)

▶ Education department toll free:
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**Let us stay mindful of caring for
one another and ourselves**