

Give Gratitude to Get Healthier

Learn the health benefits of feeling and showing gratitude.



There's more to "Thankful Thursday" than meets the social media eye.

Some research has shown that people who regularly feel and express gratitude tend to be more optimistic and satisfied in life, have higher self-esteem and sleep better. And they may even have improved physical health.

How gratitude works

Consciously focusing on positive contributors in your life can help shift your attitude — and reduce negative thoughts and feelings. Expressing and acknowledging gratitude helps you affirm the goodness in your life and the sources of this goodness. This in turn can help you keep perspective and be more resilient, even in stressful and difficult times.

Gratitude also can bring "pay it forward" benefits. Gratitude helps you — and those with whom you share it — recognize your value as individuals, get a boost from the positive reinforcement, and be more inclined to express thanks as well.

Adopting a habit of gratitude

You can proactively practice gratitude and make it a regular part of life. Here are some get-started ideas:

- **Keep a journal.** Writing down what you're thankful for helps keep you thinking about the positive aspects of your life, which may help keep stress and difficulties in perspective. It also gives you a log of positive memories to revisit and relish.
- **Send a thank-you letter.** Take the time to write to someone how much you appreciate them — and, if possible, deliver it in person. Acknowledging people who make a difference in your life can give you a “happiness boost” and give them a boost, too.
- **Focus on the positive.** When good things happen, take time to think about and savor them. Give yourself the time to enjoy positive emotions and experiences — and permission to revel in your own success.
- **Make a mental note.** Each day think about the good things in your life and take a mental picture. This can help you reinforce the positive memories.
- **Share the joy.** Make sharing what you're grateful for a regular part of your routine. For example, take time during family dinners or outings with friends to share 3 things you're thankful for.

Gratitude can go a long way in helping you instill short- and long-term positive feelings. It also may help you be better equipped to bounce back from hard times.

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Sources

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