

CULTIVATING GRATITUDE

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We search high and low, for ways to enhance our well-being. But there is a much simpler way to enhance our well-being. And, it is free—**practising gratitude.**

What is practising gratitude about? It is about paying attention to what is going right in our life, about acknowledging the contributions that others make in our life, giving thanks verbally and behaviourally. It is looking beyond and even being thankful for our difficult and painful moments as our teachers in life.

Research shows that the practice of gratitude can have a positive effect on a person's life. Such people have been found to have lower blood pressure and improved immune function and sleep. They also experience higher levels of positive emotions like happiness, love and optimism. Conversely, gratitude protects against negative emotions like resentment and greed. Gratitude also reduces risks of depression, anxiety and substance abuse disorders.

The benefits of gratitude are far reaching. Being grateful seems to impact others around us. People who practise gratitude report more satisfying interpersonal relationships. Being thankful has also been linked to more positive styles of coping when problems arise. Benefits of gratitude have been reported by kidney transplant patients, combat veterans, students, adolescents, and working adults.

Some of the most mundane things we do daily can actually help us to cultivate gratitude and contribute to a sense of well-being.

You may want to give some or all of the following a try, and see which ones best suit you:

1. Narrating events that you are thankful for on a regular basis in a diary. People who do this have been found to exercise more regularly, report better physical health and more optimistic. This is in comparison to people who kept a diary on things that made them unhappy.
2. Listing events that you feel grateful for. The simple act of just listing and not having to write a full account of things/events/people one is grateful for, has been found to improve mood and sense of well-being in as short as five minutes.
3. Thanking someone whom you have received help from.
4. Appreciating and being thankful for the beauty of nature.
5. Accepting help from another.
6. Acknowledging your strengths and being thankful for them.
7. Practising relaxation techniques like meditation and progressive muscle relaxation has been found to contribute to the enhancement of one's well-being.

Gratitude can be cultivated. Well-being can be enhanced. This will assist us to better view all that happens in life as a gift.

Try out the Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form to see if you need to include more gratitude practice in your life!

The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ-6)

1. I have so much in life to be thankful for.
2. If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.
3. When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for.*
4. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.
5. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been a part of my life history.
6. Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.*

YOUR SCORE:

Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to indicate how much you agree with it.

- 1 **strongly disagree**
- 2 **disagree**
- 3 **slightly disagree**
- 4 **neutral**
- 5 **lightly agree**
- 6 **agree**
- 7 **strongly agree**

Scoring Instructions:

- Add up your scores for items 1, 2, 4, and 5.
- Reverse your scores for items 3 and 6. That is, if you scored a "7," give yourself a "1," if you scored a "6," give yourself a "2," etc.
- Add the reversed scores for items 3 and 6 to the total from Step 1. This is your total GQ-6 score. This number should be between 6 and 42.
- The higher your score, the more gratitude practice you have in your life.