



## The Many Benefits of Expressing and Receiving Gratitude

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Robert Emmons: Benefits of Gratitude – <https://youtu.be/RRrnfGf5aWE>

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Science tells us that people who are thankful for what they have are happier and reach their goals with greater ease, and Thanksgiving is an American holiday that reminds us to take stock of all the things we're grateful for.

As noted in a previous article on this topic published in the Harvard Mental Health Letter:<sup>1</sup>

*"Gratitude is a thankful appreciation for what an individual receives, whether tangible or intangible. With gratitude, people acknowledge the goodness in their lives.*

*In the process, people usually recognize that the source of that goodness lies at least partially outside themselves. As a result, gratitude also helps people connect to something larger than themselves as individuals — whether to other people, nature, or a higher power."*

Gratitude is also associated with improved health, both physical and emotional. Dr. P. Murali Doraiswamy, head of Biologic Psychology at Duke University Medical Center once stated that:<sup>2</sup>

*"If [thankfulness] were a drug, it would be the world's best-selling product with a health maintenance indication for every major organ system."*

## Being Thankful for Your Health — Every Day

While there are as many reasons to be thankful as there are people in the world, one facet of life that many often forget to be thankful for (until it is too late) is their health. We tend to take our health for granted until we're suddenly in the throes of pain or debilitating illness.

As noted by Mark Sisson:<sup>3</sup>

*"What does it mean to be thankful for your health?... At its most basic level it can be a 'There but by the grace of God go I' feeling we get when someone we know dies of a heart attack or gets cancer. The news jolts us into awareness of our mortality, health being what keeps us on the other side. Being thankful for our health, however, means more than gratitude for being alive itself.*

*On yet another level, it means appreciating the capacities allowed by our health — the cognitive ability to practice our profession and remember our children's names, the physical ability to walk up six flights of stairs when the elevator is being serviced...*

*It's about confidence that we have the strength to move most of our own stuff when need arises and take care of our children, tend to our property, and still have energy to enjoy something of everyday life..."*

It goes back to the old adage that it's really the little things that matter most, and if you cultivate gratitude for the little things — such as being able to lift an overstuffed turkey out of the oven and remembering the names of all your friends and relatives around the table — it will foster a more deep-seated sense of [happiness](#).

After all, a lot of misery is rooted in a perceived sense of lack. But if you have good health and all your mental faculties intact, you also have the prerequisite basics for doing something about your situation.

## Science and Practice of Gratitude

Four years ago, the Greater Good Science Center at the University of California,<sup>4</sup> in collaboration with the University of California, launched a project called "Cultivating Gratitude in a Consumerist Society." This \$5.6 million project aims to:

- *Expand the scientific database of gratitude, particularly in the key areas of human health, personal, and relational well-being, and developmental science*
- *Promote evidence-based practices of gratitude in medical, educational, and organizational settings and in schools, workplaces, homes, and communities, and in so doing...*
- *Engage the public in a larger cultural conversation about the role of gratitude in civil society.*

The organization has a number of resources you can peruse at your leisure, including The Science of Happiness blog and newsletter,<sup>5</sup> and a Digital Gratitude Journal,<sup>6</sup> where you can record and share the things you're grateful for year-round.

## Gratitude Pays Many Health Dividends



**Tapping for Gratitude**  
with Julie Schiffman

Presented by Mercola.com

**Tapping for Gratitude with Julie Schiffman; <https://youtu.be/KMiSDtAI6H4>**

Keeping a gratitude journal is a practice recommended by many psychologists, and it can have far-reaching consequences. In one study,<sup>7,8</sup> people who kept a gratitude journal reported exercising more and logged fewer doctor's visits compared to those who focused on sources of aggravation. More specifically, gratitude has been linked to:

- Improved sleep<sup>9</sup>
- Reduced stress<sup>10</sup>
- Enhanced sense of well-being<sup>11</sup>
- Improved heart health,<sup>12</sup> reducing the likelihood of sudden death in patients with congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease

While such results may sound too good to be true, studies<sup>13</sup> have shown that gratitude actually produces a number of beneficial and *measurable* effects on several systems in your body, including:

<b>Mood neurotransmitters (serotonin, norepinephrine)</b>	<b>Inflammatory and immune systems (cytokines)</b>
<b>Reproductive hormones (testosterone)</b>	<b>Stress hormones (cortisol)</b>
<b>Social bonding hormones (oxytocin)</b>	<b>Blood pressure, cardiac, and EEG rhythms</b>
<b>Cognitive and pleasure related neurotransmitters (dopamine)</b>	<b>Blood sugar</b>

## The Benefits of Saying Grace

Many people, even those who normally do not say grace before every meal, will join hands with their loved ones and count their blessings before digging into their Thanksgiving dinner. As previously noted in The Huffington Post,<sup>14</sup> expressing gratitude before eating is an ancient and truly universal practice. It's not restricted to any one group, race, or religious affiliation:

*"According to theologist Laurel Schneider, historically... blessings were... an expression of gratitude to various gods and a recognition that the food 'is not ours to begin with, but loaned to us,' Schneider told Spirituality & Health magazine...*

*'Food is a necessity for life, and centuries ago... if you were starving and got something to eat, you were mighty thankful,' [Adrian] Butash [author of Bless Your Food: Ancient and Contemporary Graces from Around the World] says. 'Today, we don't think about it that much, but when you think of food as life and death, then you can see how serious it became in the consciousness of the people.'"*

Saying grace can be a great way to foster a closer and deeper connection to the food you eat, allowing for a moment to reflect on all the things that went into its creation, from the sowing of the seed, to the harvest, and the cooking. Indeed a lot of work, both by nature and man, went into creating the food before you, which will now provide you with nourishment and sustenance.

A break anywhere along the food chain can easily render food scarce, so there really is a lot to be thankful for when you have a full plate of food in front of you. And, as noted in the featured article,[15](#) saying grace before eating is a way to flex your gratitude muscle on a daily basis:

*"Often, practicing gratitude isn't an activity that we make time for. Sometimes it can even feel like a chore. But by pairing a brief gratitude exercise with an activity that we enjoy and make time for each day (like eating) can help us to make gratitude a more regular part of our lives... [leading] us to associate giving thanks with the pleasure we derive from food."*

## **Cultivating an Attitude of Gratitude Year-Round**

Your future health and happiness depends largely on the thoughts you think *today*. So each moment of every day is an opportunity to turn your thinking around, thereby helping or hindering your ability to think and feel more positively in the very next moment. Starting and/or ending each day by thinking of something you're grateful for is one way to keep your mind on the right track.

Most experts agree that there are no shortcuts to happiness. Even generally [happy people](#) do not experience joy 24 hours a day. But, a happy person can have a bad day and still find pleasure in the small things in life. So be thankful for what you have.

By focusing on what's good *right now*, in the present moment, you become more open to receive greater abundance in the future. Remember to say "thank you" — to yourself, the Universe, and others. And with that, I want to say THANK YOU to you, my readers, for your continued support throughout the year, and I wish you all a Happy and Healthy Thanksgiving!