

"Gratitude is one of the sweet shortcuts to finding peace of mind and happiness inside. No matter what is going on outside of us, there is always something we could be grateful for." Barry Neil Kaufman

Gratitude: the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return thankfulness. It comes from the Latin word *gratus* ('pleasing, thankful'). Generally, many of us have an instinctive understanding of gratitude but defining it is more difficult. Is it a virtue? Is it a behavior? Is it an emotion? Researchers such as Robert Emmons who study gratitude find that it can mean different things to different people in different contexts. Gratitude has been described as a two-step process: the first is "recognizing that one has obtained a positive outcome" and the second is "recognizing that there is an external source for this positive outcome." Gratitude is "an affirmation of goodness."

How does gratitude affect our health? Those who research "gratitude" have found that subjects in their studies report decreased levels of anxiety, envy, depression, job-related stress and burn-out. They also found that people have increases in vitality, hope, life satisfaction, and optimism. The following list of benefits from "healthline.com" include: 1) people take better care of themselves physically and mentally; 2) engage in more protective health behaviors and maintenance; 3) get more regular exercise; 4) eat a healthier diet; 5) have improved mental alertness; 6) schedule regular physical examinations with their doctors; 7) cope better with stress and daily challenges; 8) feel happier and more optimistic; 9) avoid problematic physical symptoms; 10) have stronger immune systems; and 11) maintain a brighter view of the future.

While some studies have associated gratitude with a large list of benefits such as fewer aches and pains, improved sleep or better cardiovascular health, other studies show mixed results. Overall, there is some reason to suspect that gratitude has positive influences on our health. A major question needing to be addressed: **Is it gratitude that makes people healthier or is it that grateful people live healthier lifestyles?** While studies that suggest grateful people are healthier, the studies also suggest that people in poorer health are less likely to feel being grateful. In finding some answers to this relationship, researchers are exploring whether people who engage in gratitude activities benefit from improved health. Studies that have focused on the cardio-vascular system used blood tests to measure inflammation and looked at plaque buildup in the arteries. Subjects practicing gratitude (writing in journals for two months) showed lower levels of inflammation and better heart rhythm. This may be attributed to a lower level of stress.

Suggestions for starting or continuing to practice gratitude: "Focus your attention outside of yourself! Be mindful of what you have not how much you have! Try keeping a weekly gratitude journal! Reframe challenging situations or hassles to positive situations. Switch the switch to the positive!"

For people going through a difficult period of time, the "how to be happy guru" offers these suggestions: Be grateful for your life: you are breathing and you have all of your five senses, you have a house/abode in which to live, you have food on the table, you have water to drink and wash yourself and heating to keep warm, you have kind people around you, you have people who love you, you have pets to comfort you, you have nature around you, you have music and theater and nature to stimulate your senses, and you have your freedom."

"Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not; remember that what you now have was once among the things you only hoped for." — Epicurus

Sources: <https://www.healthline.com/health/depression/giving-thanks#1> <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/gratitude/definition>
https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC-JTF_White_Paper-Gratitude-FINAL.pdf?_ga=2.141054258.1811663936.1579114920-1963272916.1579114920
<http://howtobehappy.guru/things-to-be-grateful-for-in-our-life-when-going-through-a-tough-period/>
<http://howtobehappy.guru/gratitude-helps-keep-our-hearts-healthy/>
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/is_gratitude_good_for_your_health

Quotes to give you some thoughts for the day:

- "Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it." *William Arthur Ward*
- "Let us rise up and be thankful, for if we didn't learn a lot today, at least we learned a little, and if we didn't learn a little, at least we didn't get sick, and if we got sick, at least we didn't die; so, let us all be thankful." *Buddha*
- "Silent gratitude isn't very much to anyone." *Gertrude Stein*
- "No one who achieves success does so without the help of others. The wise and confident acknowledge this help with gratitude." *Alfred North Whitehead*
- "Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold a rather large amount of Gratitude." *A.A. Milne*
- "Forget yesterday--it has already forgotten you. Don't sweat tomorrow--you haven't even met. Instead, open your eyes and your heart to a truly precious gift--today." *Steve Maraboli*
- "Gratitude also opens your eyes to the limitless potential of the universe, while dissatisfaction closes your eyes to it." *Stephen Richards*
- "This a wonderful day. I've never seen this one before." *Maya Angelou*