



# Gratitude

This time of year we are inundated with messages about how important it is for us to “give thanks” for our many blessings. Common ways people express this appreciation is through spending time with loved ones, volunteering, or helping others. Oddly enough, the American way of celebrating such a day of gratitude is to gorge ourselves with as much food as possible, watch football, and engage in a series of battles with other Black Friday shoppers over once-a-year deals on televisions.

But what would happen if you were to adopt a gracious attitude as a permanent mindset? Well, the psychological research says you’d be more satisfied with your life, you’d experience more positive emotions on a daily basis, you’d feel more relaxed and less stressed, you’d be more optimistic about your future, you’d come to have closer/stronger relationships, you’d be less prone to sickness, you’d be more creative, and—believe it or not—you’d end up living longer. Expressing more appreciation might even change your personality over time: you’ll become less depressed/anxious, more conscientious, more outgoing, easier to get along with, and more open to new ideas and experiences.

Why does gratitude have such an awesome impact? It’s because grateful people see us all as interconnected; they share a sense of responsibility and commitment to the well-being of others, placing less importance on material goods. They also re-frame the bad things that happen to them as opportunities for growth, and, most importantly, they always try to focus on the silver lining. So after Thanksgiving is over, I encourage you to keep the gratitude going:

- **Tell the important people in your life that you appreciate them.** Deep down, we all want to be recognized and appreciated. If you’re grateful for someone else (either for who they are or what they do), tell them explicitly.

- **Refocus on the blessings;** ignore the (selfish) desires and have-nots. It’s easy to find something to complain about these days—but that’s just lazy. Rather than focusing on your wants, the missed opportunities, or the things you wish you have, center your mind on the things you do have. Ask yourself if there’s anything (or anyone) you have taken for granted.

- **Start a Gratitude Journal.** This is one of the best ways to make gratitude a daily habit! Before you go to bed at night, write out at least three things that happened that day for which you are grateful. And when you’re feeling down, flip through the pages as a pleasant reminder.

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