



WELLNESS WEDNESDAY

Multiple studies have found that over time, practicing gratitude actually increases happiness and provides other physiological and psychological benefits. Scientific expert, UC Davis psychologist, and author Robert Emmons found that people who practice gratitude consistently reported the following benefits:

PHYSICAL

- Stronger immune systems
- Less bothered by aches and pains
- Lower blood pressure
- Exercise more and take better care of their health
- Sleep longer and feel more refreshed upon waking

PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Higher levels of positive emotions
- More alert, alive, and awake
- More joy and pleasure
- More optimism and happiness

SOCIAL

- More helpful, generous, and compassionate
- More forgiving
- More outgoing
- Feel less lonely and isolated

While gratitude can be a feeling that spontaneously emerges from within, it is also a choice. We have to choose to practice gratitude. Because there are various ways to practice gratitude, the trick is to find the ones that work best for you.

Here are a few examples to get started:

- **Gratitude journal:** Write down not only the things that you are grateful for, but also why you are grateful for them.
- **Thank someone who supports you:** Some people are there for us no matter what; they fully deserve our gratitude! Find one such person (or two!), and give them a big serving of gratitude.
- **Thank your body:** We tend to spend time thinking about what our bodies can't do... In doing so, we forget all that we CAN do! Our bodies perform amazing work for us all day long, so take a minute to be content about what yours does for you.
- **Gratitude for food:** The food that's on your plate made it there thanks to the effort of a multitude of different people. Note that this one is easier to feel sincere about when you eat something that comes directly from its whole and natural state. The goodness of a home cooked soup not only fills our stomachs better than a bag of chips, it also provides better emotional energy.
- **Gratitude for who you are:** We are our own worst critic. It can be very easy to see our own shortcomings and engage in downward social comparisons. So pay yourself a gratitude break, and start reaping the benefits that come when we build from what's right in front of us.
- **Gratitude in difficult times:** Life comes with challenges. The secret is to practice gratitude during those difficult and challenging times. Celebrate the little things during these times—give thanks for things that may be overlooked normally. And finally, find the good in the bad; maybe it is something you learned or an experience from which you grew.