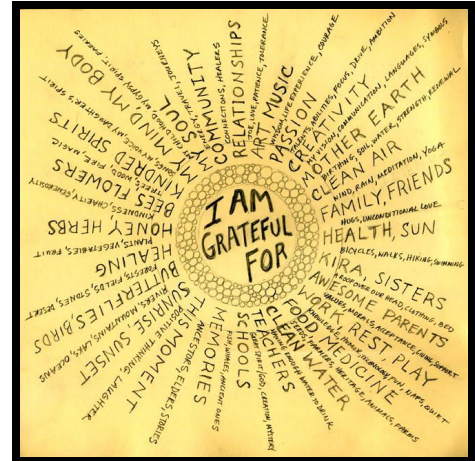




MORRISON BRUCE CENTER
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The Importance of Gratitude

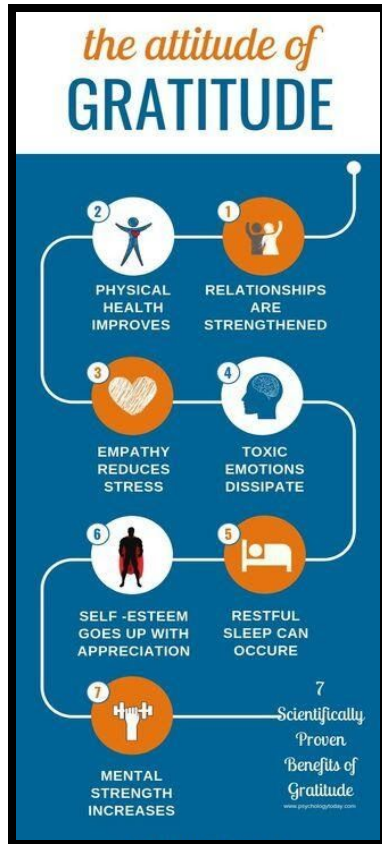
Life is uniquely challenging right now; we are constantly adjusting to our 'normal' routines shaken by a world that is continually changing and full of surprises. When feeling overwhelmed, it can be difficult to recognize and appreciate the positive things going on and the supportive people around you. Engaging in the act of gratitude is a simple way to shift your mindset and make you feel happier during these unsettling times, as well as increase self-awareness of emotions while helping others!



Gratitude is the feeling of being appreciative and thankful.¹ It involves being aware of the good things that happen in your life and taking the time to express your appreciation for them.¹ Simple ways to express your appreciation for life could be by spending time with loved ones, practicing mindfulness, or just by giving to others. There are two different types of gratitude: benefit triggered gratitude and generalized gratitude.² Benefit triggered gratitude is what is felt in response to a specific action by another individual.² Essentially, this is the type of gratitude that we learn as children because it is the main component of learning good manners. Generalized gratitude is a broader appreciation and awareness of what is important and meaningful in your life.² This type of gratitude involves a thankfulness for life itself and for anything and everything that you experience. With practice, this type of gratitude can become the state of mind that you live in and it can become part of your nature!

The three stages of gratitude are recognition, acknowledgment, and appreciation.³ Acceptance is when we learn to accept things, events, and people as they are. Not all of our stressors are avoidable or solvable; therefore, the majority of the time we do not have any control over our circumstances. However, the one thing that we can always control is how we encounter a certain situation. Choosing acceptance will positively change your mindset because you can then see the good, lessons, and beauty of struggles in your life. The second stage, acknowledgment, involves the power to recognize the importance and uniqueness of a situation, an individual, or your own self.⁴ An individual in this stage will choose to look for the good things in their life and acknowledge his/her presence every single day. This perspective demonstrates self-control and one's ability to be present with the current situation. The last stage of gratitude is appreciation, which is being grateful for

the opportunity to live each day, no matter what it brings.⁵ Appreciation shifts one's focus from what may not be going well, which attracts more negative responses, to a better feeling that will start attracting more positivity into your life. Even when things get challenging in life, you are able to learn from those moments by practicing gratitude.



Benefits of gratitude can apply to many aspects of your life^{6,7}:

- **Social benefits:** being well-liked by others, increased social support, and improved romantic, platonic, and familial relationships
- **Emotional benefits:** increased long-term happiness, reduced envy, and increased life-satisfaction
- **Mental benefits:** boosted self-esteem, improved decision-making, and increased selflessness
- **Physical benefits:** reduced symptoms of depression, lowered blood pressure, improved sleep, and increased prevalence of physical activity
- **Career benefits:** increased productivity, increased goal achievement, and improved networking

Cultivating the habit of being grateful begins with appreciating every good thing in life and recognizing that there is nothing too small for which you can be thankful. Some ways to practice self-gratitude include keeping a daily gratitude journal, thinking of two positives for every negative complaint you have, listing your favorite qualities about yourself, or even by using a gratitude app on your phone to help you be more

thankful every day.⁸ There are also ways to express your gratitude for others, such as sending a thank you card, complimenting a stranger, volunteering, or verbally telling someone you appreciate and love them. And always remember, it is never too late to start feeling grateful and reminding others the beauty of life and positivity!

References:

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