

Wellness Tip for September – Gratitude

Want to feel happier? Practice being grateful!

When we express gratitude by being thankful and showing appreciation, UCLA's Mindfulness Awareness Research Center found that we literally change the molecular structure of our brains in way that keeps our brains functioning and makes us healthier and happier! Being grateful is like taking the anti-depressant Prozac, since gratitude boosts the neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine (feel-good brain chemicals).

Gratitude also reduces pain, increases sleep quality, aids in stress regulation, builds emotional resilience, and reduces anxiety and depression!

Some ways to practice gratitude:

- Keep a gratitude journal of at least 5-10 things a day (e.g. big things like living in a peaceful country, people you are grateful for, being able to see, hear, etc. to the little things like a smile someone gave you, a bird chirping, a good cup of coffee, a song on the radio, and so on)
- Tell a colleague or friend something you appreciate about them
- Write someone a thank you note
- Notice the beauty in nature each day
- Be thankful when you learn something new
- Smile at someone
- Think about something you like about yourself
- Think about something good that came out of a bad event (e.g. lesson learned)
- Focus on all your senses and be grateful for each one
- Share gratitude each day by posting a tweet, Facebook post or Pinterest
- Write a gratitude letter to someone (you don't have to send it to get the benefit of this act)

Stuck? Think of different categories, such as a good event, experience, person, or thing in your life. Look around you. What do you see or hear that you are thankful for? You can also imagine that you will only wake up tomorrow with what you are grateful for right now. I bet suddenly the gratitude list is longer!

Want a challenge? Write a list 50 THINGS *each day for at least 4 days*. By doing this you will be adopting a new positive habit, you will learn to look at things differently, and you will probably find yourself creating experiences to create a good outcome you can add to the list. After that, not only will you find yourself noticing things to be grateful for throughout each day, but you will find 5-10 things to write at the end of every day a piece of cake.

*Crazy statistic: Dr. Robert A. Emmons in his book "thanks!" discussed a 10-week experiment he conducted that showed that practising gratitude can **increase happiness by 25%!!!** The subjects even did almost 1.5 hours more exercise a week because they felt better about life!*

"Gratitude is a powerful catalyst for happiness. It's the spark that lights a fire of joy in your soul." - Amy Collette