

Neuroscience Reveals: Gratitude Literally Rewires Your Brain to be Happier

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The act of practicing gratitude, saying *thank you* to someone who has helped you or saying *thank you* to the universe for good things that happen, can make you a happier, healthier person. It's true. Psychologists at the University of California at Davis and the University of Miami published a paper in 2003 to examine what happens to our bodies when we practice gratitude. The results might surprise you!

The Study About the Neuroscience of Gratitude

The study went like this: subjects in the study were asked to keep a daily journal of the day's events. One-third of the subjects were asked to focus on events that made them feel grateful, one-third of subjects were asked to focus on events that had upset them, and one-third of subjects were asked to record information that was neither positive nor negative.

Here's what they discovered: people who spent time examining events that had made them happy were overall happier and healthier than people who didn't. People who recorded positive events in their daily journals were more active than people who had not, and went to the doctor fewer times than people who had recorded either negative experiences or neutral experiences in their journals. Overall, people who recorded positive events in their lives also had a more optimistic view of recent events.

Other effects of gratitude include:

- Reduced feelings of anxiety

- Fewer instances of depression
- Better sleep quality
- Less fatigue
- Reduced inflammation
- Reduced risk of heart failure

Why Does Gratitude Positively Impact Your Body?

Gratitude positively impacts your body by activating the parts of the brain associated with social cognition, moral cognition, value judgment, and reward. In other words, gratitude makes you more supportive of others, and more empathetic.

It also affects metabolism, body temperature, appetite, and sleep. Feelings of gratitude are accompanied by dopamine, which is the hormone associated with pleasure. In some cases, people who practice gratitude are less likely to experience suicidal feelings.

What Can You Do To Become More Grateful?

Knowing that feelings of gratitude are good for you, here's what you can do to practice gratitude actively in your life.

Keep a Journal

Just as those people in that study benefited from writing down their positive experiences, you can too. Keep a journal of positive experiences to make it easier to examine your feelings of gratitude for positive things that have happened throughout the day.

Reflect When Something Positive Happens

Think about it when you notice yourself having a happy feeling. Ask yourself why this is something that you are grateful for, and what you might be able to do to repeat the experience.

Tell Others When Something Good Happens

When something positive happens to you, tell others about your experience. This makes it easier to remember the good things that have happened to you throughout the day.

Seeking More Happiness? Contact Pathways Real Life Recovery

Reflecting on positive experiences makes you happier and healthier, but there are other things you can do to improve your happiness. Are you feeling unhappy? [Mental health services](#) at [Pathways Real Life Recovery](#) can help. [Contact an expert](#) to find out more about outpatient and inpatient mental health services. A therapist can help you in your

effort in cultivating gratitude and can tell you more about the benefits of gratitude.
Contact Pathways Real Life Recovery to find out more about mental health treatment in Utah.