

The Importance of Gratitude in Recovery

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Why are there billionaires who seem so dissatisfied with their lives, and then there are those who live with very little who feel like they have everything they need? The reason is simple, Gratitude! Gratefulness is a mental attitude completely independent of our circumstances and it can be developed. ***For those who are recovering from addiction, cultivating this positive outlook helps assure their future success. Having a grateful perception of the world around us can change roadblocks into opportunities — the “bad” into “good”.*** Out of challenges spring the fountain of growth.

Do We Really Know What Gratitude Is?

It's easy to feel “grateful” when something good happens. But is this really what gratefulness is all about? ***Gratitude is defined as the recognition of benefits derived from something received. We can be grateful for an event, gift, favor, opportunity, circumstance, weather, etc.*** We can also be grateful as a general attitude toward life, seeing the world around us in a positive and productive light when a “normal” reaction would not be gratefulness. On the inverse, one can show signs of gratefulness, when they feel none. ***Gratitude is also about expressing thanks toward others. The simple act of thanking someone or showing appreciation to a family member or friend with regard to what they mean to you*** — not necessarily what they have done or do for you. Expressing gratitude helps us remember what is truly important — friends, family, health, security, among other more personal things. Gratitude should also be expressed toward yourself. It may sound silly or, to some, selfish to thank yourself. [You cannot truly be grateful toward others is you do not thank yourself](#) for caring for yourself, seeking help when you needed it, learning to trust others.

The Benefits of Showing Gratitude

Better Mental Health — We develop a more positive outlook, becoming stronger as we face challenges. We can think more clearly as the fog subsides and our immune and nervous systems heal, leading to fewer aches and pains which have been shown to be directly linked to our state of mind. Sleep becomes less turbulent, allowing for longer hours asleep, waking refreshed. We feel more connected to the people and the world around us.

Better Physical Health — Blood pressure goes down and we feel more like moving around, getting exercise and doing things that we enjoy with more interest, joy, and fervor.

Better Long Term Outlook — When we are grateful, we are [less likely to relapse](#) into [damaging behaviors](#). Someone who may be considering turning back to their addiction for comfort can focus on those things that they are grateful for in order to realize that that is not a path to which they wish to return.

How Can We Become More Grateful?

It is important to recognize that “gratitude is an attitude”. It’s not an emotion. We have full control over our gratefulness. But like anything, it requires a decision on our part to form a new healthy habit. According to some research, a habit can be formed in only 90 days. First, seek out things to be grateful for as much as possible. And very quickly it will become automatic well before 90 days.

1. **Wake up with morning gratitude** — Sit in a quiet place and think of all the things you are grateful for before you begin your day.
2. **Write down a list of gratitudes** — Keep it in a pocket. And pull it out if you start thinking negatively. It can be a list or if you are more auditory, a message on your phone.
3. **Keep a gratitude journal** — There are great apps available. [Learn more about the benefits of journaling in recovery here.](#)
4. **Reject comparisons** — Be grateful for what you have and who you are. Comparisons are useless because there is no way to see and know the whole person.
5. **Help others** — When we help others, it helps us better appreciate what we have. But be humble when helping others. Remember to reject comparisons. Being humble allows for the cultivation of gratitude. For those newly recovering, it could be something as simple as making coffee for meetings, holding the door, helping fold chairs.
6. **Find Comfort in Meditation and Prayer** — We need quiet reflection time to heal and become more grateful. Whether this is meditation or prayer, make time to for yourself.