

The Neuroscience of Gratitude and How It Affects Anxiety and Grief

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August 6, 2020



Do you know it is important to show gratitude for what you have or provided with? If you are blessed with a perfect family, a good job, stable finances, and a happy life, you should be grateful. Sparing that one minute to thank what you already have is what it takes to make your experience even more joyful.

So before we go any further, what exactly does gratitude mean? The word originates from a Latin word gratia. It is the state of being grateful or showing thankfulness. To understand how the power of gratitude works, we are going to look at the following;

- Gratitude and happiness
- Gratitude and health
- Gratitude and professional commitment
- Neuroscience of gratitude

Gratitude and Happiness

Gratitude can improve your interpersonal relationship both at home and at work. This can bring you happiness. When you show appreciation to yourself and others, you induce a positive emotion, which is technically happiness. So our overall health and wellbeing are impacted by the feelings of pleasure and contentment derived from gratitude.

According to a study conducted by the British psychologist Robert Holden, 65 percent of people choose happiness over health. However, both are of equal magnitude as far as good health is concerned. So in his study, he concluded that the state of unhappiness is the root of many psychopathological conditions like depression and stress, to mention a few.

Gratitude and Health

According to some researches, grateful people are healthy and happy. This is because they have low stress and depression levels, and they can cope better with adversity, and above all, they can sleep better. These people tend to be happier and are likely satisfied with life. So on top of being grateful, keeping a gratitude journal is also beneficial to your health. It reduces the stress level, improves the quality of sleep, and also builds emotional awareness.

Gratitude and Professional Commitment

If you want to build your professional commitment, then be grateful. Grateful employees are more efficient, productive, and above all, responsible. Showing gratitude at the workplace imperative in building an interpersonal relationship with colleagues. It can trigger feelings of closeness and bonding. If you are an employee who shows gratitude, then you likely to be loved by others.

Neuroscience of Gratitude

According to neuroscience research, there is a link between positive thoughts and activation of certain neurotransmitters. Putting the technicalities aside, if you focus your attention on things you are grateful for, you stimulate neurotransmitters in your brain (dopamine and serotonin) to promote contentment.

The study of neuroscience and gratitude is broad and would probably take a whole chapter just looking at it. What you need to understand is that people have different neurochemicals in their central nervous system, and this is why some are naturally grateful than others. If someone expresses and feels gratitude, it means he or she has more grey matter in their right inferior temporal gyrus.

Now that you understand the benefits of gratitude and its impacts on your life, it would be better to learn how you can practice it. So the question is, how to practice gratitude? The following are a few ways of practicing gratitude.

- Keep a gratitude journal.
- Show love to someone and tell him or her how much you appreciate them.
- Nurture the friendship you have
- Smile regularly
- Spend each day showing kindness

Mental health services will help shape our thoughts to focus on gratitude and promote happiness and peaceful co-existence in our communities. If we focus our mindset on doing good, then we will have what it takes to accomplish the endeavors in our lives.