

2020 Gratitude

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It's that time of year. The holiday season is around the corner, or by the looks of any grocery store...it's here right now. With Thanksgiving comes a time to be grateful AND there's a lot of evidence about what a gratitude practice can do for you. Not only does it improve your mental and physical health, it helps you sleep better, reduces aggression, increases self-esteem, and more. However, this year, of all years, grasping at gratitude can be a bit difficult, to say the least. Add to that we are facing a potential long winters nap - *I mean lock down*. But wait! I thought this was about gratitude? Even (*especially*) in challenging times, it's important to turn towards gratitude. As Oprah Winfrey once said, "Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough."

Regardless of what's going on, there is always something for which we can be grateful. If you don't have a regular practice here are three reasons to begin - and if your practice is going strong, mix it up and use the ideas below to help.

Why practice gratitude?

1. **It feels good.** Grateful people experience fewer aches and pains and report feeling healthier than other people. Not surprisingly, grateful people are also more likely to take care of their health. They move their bodies more often and are more likely to get outside. *Good and good for you.*
2. **It helps mark time.** I have a notebook in which I write three things I'm grateful for every night before bed. I have been known to take a break here and there, but for the most part I write one to three words every night, aiming to not repeat from previous days. One notebook often lasts five or more years, and it's fun to look back and notice what I was grateful for on this day in years past. It's also helpful to read through at years end, noting any patterns. These patterns inform me as to when I was thriving, and when I was struggling.
3. **Challenges the brain** (*which is also good for the body!*). For years, research has shown gratitude not only reduces stress but may also play a major role in overcoming trauma. Recognizing all you have to be thankful for - even during the worst times of your life - fosters resilience. A regular practice allows you to sift through your day and find those nuggets - even in the worst of times - that you can appreciate. The details are complicated, but the overall picture is not - if you want to improve your health, improve your mind with gratitude.

Mixing it up:

Get outside: Go on a walk or run outdoors. Every so often, name something for which you are grateful. The rain, waves, blue sky, fresh air - whatever. Take your time and appreciate being out in nature.

Try something new or do something difficult. I like to practice this when running uphill. I'm slow, and don't particularly love (read: HATE) hills, so instead of concentrating on how much I dislike running uphill, I like to turn my attention to what I can appreciate.

Here's the bottom line: **We all have the ability and opportunity to cultivate gratitude.** Rather than complain about all the things that have gone wrong, take a few moments to focus on everything that is right. Your body knows the difference, and you will too!!!

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Beth Cline is a movement coach specializing in the body and the mind. Her clients are people of all shapes, sizes, and skill levels. Some come for athletic movement, others come for movement in life (career, health, future, etc.). Either way, it starts with energy. Energy flow leads to ease, and life can be easy! Beth teaches people to pay attention, to listen and learn, instead of moving through pain. Move, *with intention*. Follow her blog on her website at www.bethcline.com; connect on social media:

