

CONNECT WITH EASE

Employee Assistance Service for Education



Monthly Article:

Practicing Gratitude



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MESSAGE FROM EASE

November is National GRATITUDE month! Gratitude is a practice that has been found to improve well-being. It has amazing powers that can shift us from focusing on the negative in our life, to appreciating what is going well that can often get overlooked, or be difficult to see during hard times. Gratitude comes from the ancient word "Gratuido", which means to find what is pleasing or to give thanks, as well as being related to the blessings at mealtime. The benefit of gratitude is that it can cultivate a sense of openness, appreciation, altruism, and kindness. This requires awareness, and choice.

"We can choose to be grateful, or we can choose to be ungrateful—to take our gifts and blessings for granted."

- Angeles Arrien (Living in Gratitude, Book)

Gratitude is not just a practice. It is a way of being. Practicing gratitude can transform the lens in which we see and experience the world. It can transform the way in which others experience you. Even in difficult situations, or painful seasons in our lives, it is possible to be grateful for the opportunity to be more compassionate, patient, forgiving, and accepting of ourselves and others.

Surprisingly, Gratitude is easy to do! It depends on where you choose to place your attention. You can focus on what is missing in your life, or you can focus on what is present!

This month practice having an "Attitude of Gratitude"!

PRACTICING GRATITUDE

By: EASE Staff

Gratitude is defined as the state of being grateful and expressing thankfulness. It is an appreciation for what an individual receives, whether tangible or intangible. Additionally, it is a form of expression that helps people connect to something larger-- whether to other people or nature. It allows people to acknowledge the goodness in their lives and recognize that the source of that goodness lies at least partially outside themselves. More than any other personality trait, gratitude is strongly linked to mental health and life satisfaction. It has been found that people who practice gratitude experience more positive emotions (e.g., joy, love), sleep better, and experience more compassion. It has also been found that gratitude reduces the lifetime risk of substance abuse, depression, and anxiety. Engaging in this state of mind can give you a deep trust that goodness exists, even in the face of uncertainty and suffering.

Research has examined the connections between gratitude and various elements of psychological well-being. The studies suggest that more grateful people are happier, more satisfied with their lives, less materialistic, and less likely to suffer from burnout. In addition, other studies have found that gratitude practices such as a "gratitude journal" or writing thank you notes, can increase people's happiness and overall positive mood.

Ways To Practice Gratitude

- **Write a thank-you note.** Write a letter that expresses your enjoyment and appreciation of someone who makes a positive impact in your life. You can choose to send the letter or hand deliver and read it to the person, if possible. Make a habit of sending a gratitude letter at least once a month and write one to yourself!
- **Keep a gratitude journal.** Take time to write down the new things that you're grateful for each day. This includes any gifts you received or new experiences. Write down your thoughts about how this made you feel.
- **Count your blessings.** Take some time each week to sit down and write 3-5 things you're grateful for or things that went right. Be specific and think about the sensations you felt when something good happened to you.
- **Meditate.** Practice mindfulness as you focus on the present moment without judgment. Focus on what you're grateful for as you complete your mindfulness practice.

<http://ei.yale.edu/what-is-gratitude/>
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>
https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC-JTF_White_Paper-Gratitude-FINAL.pdf

Gratitude may also benefit people with various medical and psychological challenges. Studies found that more grateful cardiac patients reported better sleep, less fatigue, and lower levels of cellular information, meanwhile another study found that heart failure patients who kept a gratitude journal for eight weeks were more grateful and had reduced signs of inflammation afterwards. Other studies have found that more grateful people experience less depression and are more resilient following traumatic events.



Gratitude Meditations for Practice

HeadSpace: Gratitude Meditation

<https://www.headspace.com/meditation/gratitude>

Stop, Breathe & Think Gratitude Meditation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhF8vLesRRc>

TALK TO US

EASE has counselors if you want to talk.

(800) 882-1341