

# Gratitude as Medicine: A Survival Kit for Health Care Organizations

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THE GREATER GOOD SCIENCE CENTER AT UC BERKELEY

# Overview

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The [Greater Good Science Center](#) (GGSC) at the University of California, Berkeley, studies the psychology, sociology, and neuroscience of well-being, and teaches skills that foster a thriving, resilient, and compassionate society. The GGSC is unique in its commitment to both science and practice: Not only do we sponsor groundbreaking scientific research into social and emotional well-being, we help people apply this research to their personal and professional lives.

The GGSC is pleased to present this Gratitude as Medicine Survival Kit, designed to help health care organizations support the health of those under their care—staff and patients like—by drawing on the practices and benefits of gratitude. It is based on the latest gratitude science, along with best practices from several of our health care partners.

In addition to this complete PDF of the Survival Kit, you can also download the Powerpoint version of the slide presentation, "[Why Gratitude Matters in Health Care](#)," and find other components of the Kit on our [Gratitude in Health Care webpage](#).

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# Acknowledgments

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## ABOUT EXPANDING THE SCIENCE AND PRACTICE OF GRATITUDE

[Expanding the Science and Practice of Gratitude](#) is a multiyear project launched by the Greater Good Science Center in collaboration with Robert Emmons of the University of California, Davis, and funded by the [John Templeton Foundation](#). The general goals of this initiative are to:

- Expand the scientific database of gratitude, particularly in the key areas of human health, personal and relational well-being, and developmental science;
- Raise awareness and engage the public in a larger cultural conversation about the meaning and significance of gratitude; and
- Promote evidence-based practices of gratitude in educational, medical, and organizational settings.

We extend our gratitude to the John Templeton Foundation for making this work possible and to Catherine Brozena of ColorThisWorld Communications for her work on this Survival Kit.

## THANK YOU TO OUR HEALTH CARE PARTNERS

The Greater Good Science Center would also like to thank the many health care organizations who have helped to inform these resources, including those who attended our 2015 Pioneering Gratitude in Health Care convening as well as representatives from the following health care providers who agreed to speak with us further about their specific gratitude efforts:

- Dignity Health
- Kaiser Permanente
- Sharp Best Health
- Scripps Health
- Sutter Health

# **Take the Gratitude Challenge**

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## **INTERESTED IN SEEING WHAT GRATITUDE CAN DO FOR YOU?**

Consider registering yourself or your organization for a Gratitude Challenge through [Thnx4.org](http://Thnx4.org), the GGSC's online, sharable gratitude journal that helps you say "thanks" for the good people and things in your life.

### **HOW IT WORKS**

- Register for a 21-Day or 10-Day Gratitude Challenge at Thnx4.org.
- Receive an email every other day for three weeks, or every day for 10 days, inviting you to record and share what you felt grateful for recently.
- After 21 days, you'll receive your gratitude profile and enjoy the benefits of giving thanks: greater happiness, better health, stronger relationships.



Learn more at  
[Thnx4.org](http://Thnx4.org)

# Why Gratitude Matters in Health Care

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THE GREATER GOOD SCIENCE CENTER AT UC BERKELEY

[ggsc.berkeley.edu](http://ggsc.berkeley.edu)

 Greater Good  
Science Center



# What is Gratitude?

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A recognition that...

- There's goodness in our lives, gifts or benefits that we enjoy (and might often take for granted).
- This goodness is often due to the actions of another person. When we're grateful, we recognize the intention and effort that went into those actions on our behalf, and the benefits they gave us.

*(Emmons, 2003 & 2007)*

# How Can Gratitude Help Us?

Over the past two decades, studies have consistently identified strong benefits of gratitude for our minds, bodies, and relationships.



- Gratefulness increases happiness and life satisfaction.
- Grateful people are more resilient to stress.
- Grateful people get along better with others.
- Grateful people are less depressed.
- Grateful people achieve more.
- Grateful people are more helpful and generous.



# Gratitude Motivates

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Gratitude motivates people to make positive changes in their lives and in the world around them through feelings of:

- **CONNECTEDNESS:** Gratitude rewards us with a strong network of support and encouragement, leading us to feel that we are capable of tackling big challenges.
- **ELEVATION:** Gratitude helps us feel inspired and uplifted, motivating us to become healthier & more generous people and better & more productive workers.
- **HUMILITY:** Expressing gratitude forces us to recognize that our successes are due, at least in part, to the actions of others.
- **INDEBTEDNESS:** Gratitude encourages us to recognize and reciprocate the good that others have given us, thus ridding ourselves of psychological debts we carry.

# Gratitude in Health Care Settings

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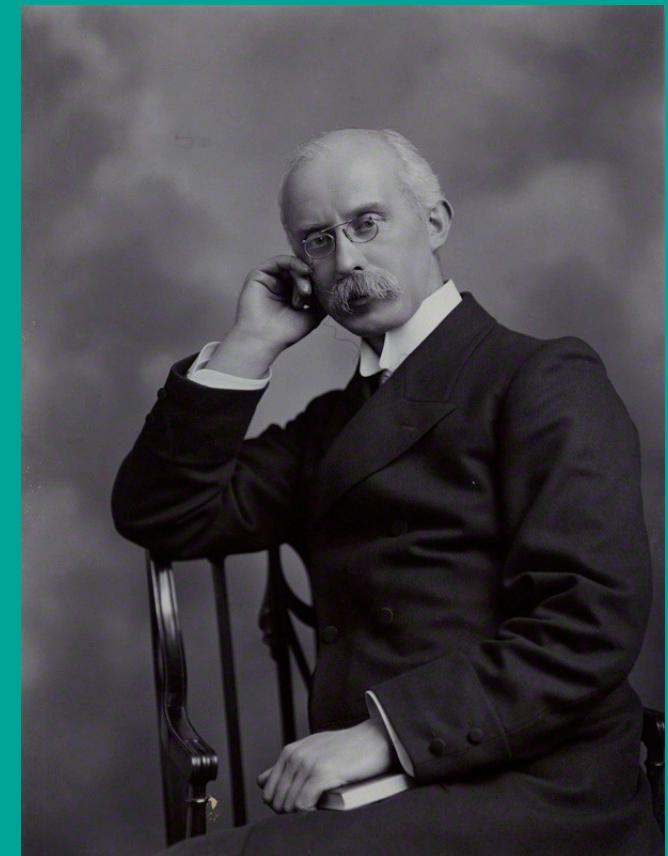
HOW GRATITUDE SUPPORTS THE HEALTH OF  
PROVIDERS AND PATIENTS

# Why Gratitude in Health Care?

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“Gratitude is a vaccine, an antitoxin, and an antiseptic.”

*~ John Henry Jowett, 1863-1923*



# Gratitude and Health

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## Improves

- Sleep
- Tendency to exercise
- Cardiovascular health
- Adherence to medication
- Mood, optimism, hope



## Reduces

- Substance abuse
- Fat intake
- Cortisol
- Blood pressure
- Suicidal thoughts
- Inflammation
- Perceived stress and depression in health care providers



# Gratitude Helps Patients

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*Study by Wong, Owen, Gabana & Gilman (2015):*

Adults & college students receiving mental health counseling (for depression/anxiety) were given these additional therapies:

- Group 1: Write 1 letter of gratitude to another person weekly for 3 weeks
- Group 2: Write about their deepest thoughts and feelings about stressful experiences
- Group 3: No writing activity

## RESULTS:

- Group 1 reported significantly better mental health than the other groups 1 month after the writing exercise ended, then again 3 months after



# Gratitude Helps Patients

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*Study by Redwine et. al. (2016):*

Patients with Stage B heart failure were studied:

- Took blood samples
- Measured heart rates
- 50% of study participants kept a daily gratitude journal

RESULTS:

- Those who kept gratitude journals showed fewer biological signs that their heart disease was getting worse
- Showed healthier resting heart rate while journaling in the lab



# Gratitude Helps Patients

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## *Study by Huffman et al (2016):*

Participants who had a recent acute coronary event were asked to:

- Report on their levels of gratitude right afterwards, and 3 & 6 months later
- Keep track of physical activity with step counters

## RESULTS:

- Those who felt more grateful after their heart problems engaged in more healthy behaviors and reported better quality of life.





# Gratitude Helps Patients

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## *Study by Huffman et al (2014):*

Patients with psychiatric problems were given 1 of 9 positive psychological exercises to do over 8 weeks, including writing a gratitude letter and counting blessings.

## RESULTS:

- Patients reported less anxiety and depression than those who received standard treatments.
- Patients reported the greatest benefit from the gratitude exercises, especially the gratitude letter.



# Gratitude in the Workplace

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Surveys have found that:

- People are less likely to express thanks at work than anyplace else
- 60% NEVER or very rarely thanked anyone at work
- Only 10% expressed gratitude at work on a given day
- 35% worried that expressing gratitude would lead co-workers to take advantage of them





# Gratitude in the Workplace

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Yet surveys also show that:

- Saying “thanks” at work makes people feel happier and hearing “thanks” made them happier and more productive (by 50%)
- Only 18% felt expressing gratitude made bosses seem weak; 93% said grateful bosses were more likely to succeed
- In general, “Thank you” from a supervisor boosts self-worth and self-efficacy; gratitude recipients become more trusting and more helpful
- According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the number one reason why people leave their jobs is because they don’t feel appreciated.



# Gratitude and Health Care Providers

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43% of nurses and **more than half** of physicians say they have struggled with **BURNOUT**.

**Burnout** is a complex state of being, generally defined by:

- Emotional exhaustion
- cynicism and callous attitudes towards others
- a reduced ability to be effective in our jobs and relationships.





# Gratitude Helps Health Care Providers

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*Study by Cheng, Tsui & Lam (2015):*

Health care providers twice weekly wrote down things for which they were grateful.

RESULTS:

- Reductions in perceived stress (28%) and depression (16%) in health care practitioners
- “Such positive effects can also lead to an improvement in both productivity and quality of patient services.”





# Building a Culture of Gratitude

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LESSONS LEARNED FROM HEALTH CARE PARTNERS

# Building a Culture of Gratitude

## HARDWIRING GRATITUDE



Efforts to foster gratitude are most effective when they are baked into organizational culture, supporting individual practice while working toward systemic change.

# Building a Culture of Gratitude

## VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION



Expressions of gratitude and gratitude programs as a whole should not be forced on employees. Rather, gratitude needs to be fostered in a way that respects staff time.

# Building a Culture of Gratitude

## MAINTAINING AUTHENTICITY



Gratitude should be a practice that is encouraged and allowed to grow organically.

# Building a Culture of Gratitude

## MAKING GRATITUDE A YEAR-ROUND ACTIVITY



Gratitude will thrive when it's not just done as part of discrete programs or at certain times of the year but is connected to other, year-round efforts to foster a positive, caring culture.

# Building a Culture of Gratitude

## BUILDING A RESILIENCE TOOLKIT

Mindfulness techniques, training caregivers in the art of compassion, and engaging in campaigns to encourage kindness are all practices that, together with gratitude, offer an array of tools that staff can use.





# Want to Practice More Gratitude?

## TRY THESE!

Find more at:

- [ggia.berkeley.edu](http://ggia.berkeley.edu)



**Greater Good in Action**  
Science-based Practices for a Meaningful Life



**CASUAL** ★★★★☆  
Frequency: 1x/week | Duration: 10 mins



**MODERATE** ★★★★☆  
Frequency: Variable | Duration: 30 mins



**CASUAL** ★★★★☆  
Frequency: 1x/day | Duration: 10 mins

### Gratitude Journal

Count your blessings and enjoy better health and happiness.

### Gratitude Letter

Write a letter expressing thanks, and deliver it in person.

### Gratitude Meditation

Feel grateful as you reflect on all the gifts in your life.



# Want to Practice More Gratitude?

## TRY THIS!

Register at:

- [Thnx4.org](http://Thnx4.org)

### How it works:

- Register for a 10-Day Intensive or 21-Day Gratitude Challenge
- Receive a friendly, informative ping from Thnx4 daily or every other day inviting you to journal and share your gratitude and rate your day-to-day feelings.
- Throughout the challenge, your Thnx4 Insights page shows you how you typically use gratitude and the overall impact of your Gratitude Challenge.
- Enjoy the benefits of strengthening gratitude with Thnx4.



# Thank You!

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VISIT [greatergood.berkeley.edu](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu) FOR MORE GREAT RESOURCES

# How GRATITUDE Supports HEALTH

Research has found that gratitude is good for our bodies, our minds, and our relationships.



# Cultivating the Practice of Gratitude in Health Care

## Action #1: Savoring Walk | individual action

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### TIME REQUIRED:

20 minutes daily for at least one week.

### HOW TO DO IT:

Set aside 20 minutes to take a walk outside by yourself every day for a week. You might explore ways to do this on your way to/from work or on a lunch break. Try to stick to this schedule unless the weather is extremely bad. You can still do this exercise in a light rain, provided you have a decent umbrella and rain jacket.

As you walk, try to notice as many positive things around you as you can. These can be sights, sounds, smells, or other sensations. For example, you could focus on the breathtaking height of a tree you never really noticed before, the intricate architecture of a building on your block, the dance of sunshine off a window or puddle, the smell of grass or flowers, or the way other people look out for each other as they navigate crowded streets.

As you notice each of these positive things, acknowledge each one in your mind—don't just let them slip past you. Pause for a moment as you hear or see each thing and make sure it registers with your conscious awareness, really take it in. Try to identify what it is about that thing that makes it pleasurable to you. Let the sensations around you conjure up feelings of gratitude for the gift of life and living that they represent. Explore ways that you can respond in gratitude, perhaps with a small or a silent return of positive thought directed at whom and what you see.

Try to walk a different route each day so you don't become too accustomed to any of these things and start to take them for granted.

### SOURCE:

Appears on the Greater Good Science Center website [Greater Good in Action](#).

Practice originally created by Fred Bryant, Ph.D., of Loyola University Chicago.

# Cultivating the Practice of Gratitude in Health Care

## Action #2: Caregiving with Intention | individual action

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### TIME REQUIRED:

3 minutes before and after each encounter with a person you are attending to.

### HOW TO DO IT:

As a caregiver, in whatever capacity, we are often rushing from person to person to tend to their needs without being fully present to the moment and the gift of the encounter we are having. With just a momentary pause before an encounter, you can change the experience you are about to have, both for yourself and the person for whom you are providing care.

Slow down before each encounter, take a few deep breaths, and allow yourself the presence of mind to truly see and be with a patient's struggles. Greet them with a soft smile. With intentionality, thank them for allowing you to be involved in their lives at this important time.

Take in the rush of emotion and allow it to give you strength and compassion to continue your day and go about this important work. Allow the experience to remind you of the beauty of human interaction you have been part of, for the shared struggles and joys. Give thanks for the occupation of healing of which you have the honor of being part.

### SOURCE:

Practice inspired by Leif Haas, M.D., a family medicine physician and hospitalist in Oakland, California. Read [his article](#) on *Greater Good* magazine.

# Cultivating the Practice of Gratitude in Health Care

## Action #3: Gratitude Wall | organizational action

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### TIME REQUIRED:

Up to 1 hour to create; 3 minutes to give/receive gratitude.

### HOW TO DO IT:

Create a space where colleagues can acknowledge the positive contributions, work-related achievements, and herculean efforts of others. Hang a large bulletin board or large blank paper in a conspicuous location, along with post-it notes (or notepaper with thumbtacks) and markers nearby. Get creative—you could create a paper bulletin “tree” with leaf-shaped post-its, or use other shapes and designs that make the space attractive. Place a little instruction sheet nearby.

Invite colleagues to add positive notes and expressions of gratitude onto the bulletin board. In your instructions, you could invite people to pause and take a moment to reflect on a kind or selfless act that you witnessed or experienced. You might consider inviting patients and visitors to your health care space to participate in the exchange, giving them the opportunity to express notes of gratitude for the care they received.

As the notes fill up the bulletin board, find opportunities during shift breaks and workday meetings to read a few of the notes out loud or in small groups, or invite teams to reflect on the expressions silently.

### SOURCE:

See “The Tribute Wall” in *Connect: Create a Culture of Appreciation in Your Organization*, copyright 2013 by Stephanie Pollack. Explore more ways to cultivate gratitude at Pollack’s [Culture of Appreciation website](#).

Also inspired by practices at Kaiser Permanente and other organizations.

# Cultivating the Practice of Gratitude in Health Care

## Action #4: Heart & Soul of the Month | organizational action

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### TIME REQUIRED:

Up to 1 hour to create; 15 minutes to nominate, make the award, and acknowledge

### HOW TO DO IT:

Appoint the most inspirational individual in a department with the “Heart and Soul” award because she or he naturally spreads positivity and appreciation throughout the organization.

Once a month, invite everyone to reflect on and nominate someone who they believe encompasses the giving spirit of the organization or department. Designate this individual as the “Heart and Soul” and feature them in some special way—on a visible wall or bulletin board posting, in a newsletter, on the intranet, or in a department-wide email.

On the first workday of the month, rally your department or team together in shouting out that month’s Heart and Soul awardee. Make sure to express the special qualities that make this person wonderful. Offer a verbal or written note of gratitude on behalf of the department or organization for the many ways this person exemplifies goodness and selfless giving. Consider holding a small Heart and Soul reception to bring the team together to honor the awardee.

### SOURCE:

See “Heart and Soul of the Month” from *Connect: Create a Culture of Appreciation in Your Organization*, copyright 2013 by Stephanie Pollack. Explore more ways to cultivate gratitude at Pollack’s [Culture of Appreciation website](#).

# Cultivating the Practice of Gratitude in Health Care

## Action #5: Invite Patient Gratitude | organizational action

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### TIME REQUIRED:

Up to 1 hour to design and/or purchase journals and thank you notecards and designate a space to provide them; more time is needed to organize expressions of gratitude through donations.

### HOW TO DO IT:

Patients, their families, and those who are on the receiving end of care may be going through life-altering events in light of the health challenges they are experiencing. Gratitude can be a healing and rejuvenating force for them and can often make a big difference to those who are providing care. Create space for these patients and their families to express gratitude and appreciation, whether in the form of personal journaling, individual notes of thanks, or even financial offerings to the health care organization that cared for them (to support efforts to provide similar care to others).

Consider placing a basket of blank thank you cards in hallways or corners of patient rooms; invite those present to reflect on something or someone that made them happy during their experience of care. Or offer up blank journals with colors and designs that bring joy and invite reflection. Mention these casually to patients and their families, or post a small sign highlighting the opportunity. Designate a box or basket where thank you notes can be deposited. For financial donations, work with patients and their families to find an appropriate channel for them to make a safe, secure donation that can support the hospital's operations.

Of course, for patients and families dealing with major health challenges, it can be difficult to find the time and motivation to express these moments of thanks. Consider inviting hospital chaplains and others who offer emotional and spiritual support to work with patients and help them find moments in their struggle, however big or small, for which they can give thanks and express their gratitude through cards and journal writing.

### SOURCE:

Practice inspired by Kevin Crowe, Director of Grateful Patient & Family Fundraising Philanthropy for Dignity Health. Learn more by visiting the [Dignity Health Philanthropy website](#).

# Cultivating the Practice of Gratitude in Health Care

## Action #6: Gratitude Letter | individual action

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### TIME REQUIRED:

At least 15 minutes for writing the letter and at least 30 minutes for the visit.

### HOW TO DO IT:

Call to mind someone who did something for you for which you are extremely grateful but to whom you never expressed your deep gratitude. This could be a relative, friend, teacher, or colleague. Try to pick someone who is still alive and could meet you face-to-face in the next week. It may be most helpful to select a person or act that you haven't thought about for a while—something that isn't always on your mind. If physical distance keeps you from making a visit, you may choose to arrange a phone or video chat.

Now, write a letter to one of these people, guided by the following steps:

- Write as though you are addressing this person directly ("Dear \_\_\_\_\_")
- Don't worry about perfect grammar or spelling.
- Describe in specific terms what this person did, why you are grateful to this person, and how this person's behavior affected your life. Try to be as concrete as possible.
- Describe what you are doing in your life now and how you often remember his or her efforts.
- Try to keep your letter to roughly one page (~300 words).

Next, you should try, if at all possible, to deliver your letter in person, following these steps:

- Plan a visit with the recipient. Let that person know you'd like to see them and have something special to share, but don't reveal the exact purpose of the meeting.
- When you meet, let the person know that you are grateful to them and would like to read a letter expressing your gratitude; ask that they refrain from interrupting until you're done.
- Take your time reading the letter. While you read, pay attention to their reaction and yours.
- After you have finished, be receptive to their reaction and discuss your feelings together.
- Remember to give the letter to the person when you leave.

### SOURCE:

Appears on the Greater Good Science Center website [Greater Good in Action](#).

Practice created and tested by researchers Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D., of the University of California, Riverside; Kristin Layous, Ph.D., of California State University, East Bay; and Martin Seligman, Ph.D., of the University of Pennsylvania.

# Cultivating the Practice of Gratitude in Health Care

## Action #7: Gratitude Journal | individual action

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### TIME REQUIRED:

15 minutes per day, at least twice per week for two weeks.

### HOW TO DO IT:

There's no wrong way to keep a gratitude journal, but here are some general guidelines.

Write down up to five things for which you feel grateful. The physical record is important—don't just do this exercise in your head. The things you list can be relatively small in importance ("The tasty sandwich I had for lunch today.") or relatively large ("My sister gave birth to a healthy baby boy."). The goal of the exercise is to remember a good event, experience, person, or thing in your life, then enjoy the good emotions that come with it. As you write, here are nine important tips:

1. Be as specific as possible—specificity is key to fostering gratitude. "I'm grateful that my co-workers brought me soup when I was sick on Tuesday" will be more effective than "I'm grateful for my co-workers."
2. Go for depth over breadth. Elaborating in detail about a particular person or thing for which you're grateful carries more benefits than a superficial list of many things.
3. Get personal. Focusing on people to whom you are grateful has more of an impact than focusing on things for which you are grateful.
4. Try subtraction, not just addition. Consider what your life would be like without certain people or things, rather than just tallying up all the good stuff. Be grateful for the negative outcomes you avoided, escaped, prevented, or turned into something positive—try not to take that good fortune for granted.
5. See good things as "gifts." Thinking of the good things in your life as gifts guards against taking them for granted. Try to relish and savor the gifts you've received.
6. Savor surprises. Try to record events that were unexpected or surprising, as these tend to elicit stronger levels of gratitude.
7. Revise if you repeat. Writing about some of the same people and things is OK, but zero in on a different aspect in detail.
8. Write regularly. Whether you write every other day or once a week, commit to a regular time to journal, then honor that commitment. But...
9. Don't overdo it. Evidence suggests writing occasionally (1-3 times per week) is more beneficial than daily journaling. That might be because we adapt to positive events and can soon become numb to them—that's why it helps to savor surprises.

### SOURCE:

Appears on the Greater Good Science Center website [Greater Good in Action](#).

Practice has been created and tested by researchers including Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D., of the University of California, Riverside, and Robert Emmons, Ph.D., of the University of California, Davis.

# The Science of Gratitude

## Resource List

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### Relevant Studies

#### Gratitude & Mental Health

##### **Does gratitude writing improve the mental health of psychotherapy clients?**

Wong, Y.J., Owen, J., Gabana, N.T., Brown, J.W., McInnis, S., Toth, P., & Gilman, L. (2016). [Does gratitude writing improve the mental health of psychotherapy clients? Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial](#). *Psychotherapy Research*, May 3, 1-11.

A study of adults seeking university-based psychotherapy services found that those who wrote letters expressing gratitude to others during a 12-week period reported significantly better mental health than did others in the study.

##### **Improving mental health in health care practitioners**

Cheng, S.T., Tsui, P.K., & Lam, J.H. (2015). [Improving Mental Health in Health Care Practitioners: Randomized Controlled Trial of a Gratitude Intervention](#). *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 83(1), 177-186.

This study looked at chronic occupational stress in health care practitioners; results suggest that directing practitioners' attention to events at work for which they were grateful reduces stress and depressive symptoms.

##### **Feasibility and utility of positive psychology exercises for suicidal inpatients**

Huffman, J.C., DuBois, C.M., Healy, B.C., Boehm, J.K., Kashdan, T.B., Celano, C.M., Denninger, J.W., Lyubomirsky, S. (2014). [Feasibility and utility of positive psychology exercises for suicidal inpatients](#). *General Hospital Psychiatry*, 36(1), 88-94.

This study assessed the feasibility and acceptability of nine positive psychology exercises delivered to patients hospitalized for suicidal thoughts or behaviors, exploring the relative impact of the exercises. It found that the exercises were associated with short-term gains in clinically relevant outcomes, with two exercises—writing a gratitude letter and counting blessings—delivering the greatest benefit.

## **Gratitude and Well-Being**

Wood, A. M., Froh, J.J., & Geraghty, A.W. (2010). [Gratitude and Well-Being: A Review and Theoretical Integration](#). *Clinical Psychology Review*, 30(7), 890–905.

Presents a new model of gratitude incorporating both gratitude that arises following help from others and habitual appreciations of the positive aspects of life.

## **The Role of Gratitude in the Development of Social Support, Stress, and Depression**

Wood, A. M., Maltby, J., Gillett, R., Linley, A., & Joseph, S. (2008). [The role of gratitude in the development of social support, stress, and depression: Two longitudinal studies](#). *Journal of Research in Personality*, 42(4), 854–871.

In two longitudinal studies, the authors examined the direction of the relationships between trait gratitude, perceived social support, stress, and depression during a life transition.

## **How to Increase and Sustain Positive Emotion**

Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006). [How to Increase and Sustain Positive Emotion: The Effects of Expressing Gratitude and Visualizing Best Possible Selves](#). *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1(2), 73–82.

Regularly practicing counting one's blessings and visualizing best possible selves are shown to raise and maintain positive mood.

## **Gratitude and Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being in Vietnam War Veterans**

Kashdan, T.B., Uswatte, G., & Julian, T. (2006). [Gratitude and Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being in Vientam War Veterans](#). *Behavior Research and Therapy*, 44(2), 177–199.

This study investigated the extent to which dispositions of gratitude can predict feelings of well-being in veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It found that dispositional gratitude predicted greater daily positive affect, motivation, and self-esteem to counter the effects of PTSD.

## **Positive Psychology Progress**

Seligman, M.E., Steen, T.A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). [Positive Psychology Progress: Empirical Validation of Interventions](#). *American Psychologist*, 60(5), 410–21.

The authors discuss recent developments in the field of positive psychology, including the classification of character strengths and virtues. In a study examining five purported happiness interventions, the authors found that three of the interventions increased happiness and decreased depressive symptoms, illustrating that positive interventions can supplement traditional interventions to relieve suffering.

## **Counting Blessings Versus Burdens**

Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). [Counting Blessings Versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life](#). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(2), 377-389.

Examines the effect of a grateful outlook on one's well-being through three different studies involving the use of participants recording their moods and experiences with gratitude.

## **The Grateful Disposition**

McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J-A. (2002). [The Grateful Disposition: A Conceptual and Empirical Topography](#). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(1), 112-127.

Four studies examine the correlates of the disposition toward gratitude, finding that people who see themselves—and are seen by others—as having a grateful disposition also report more well-being, prosocial behaviors, and spirituality.

## **Gratitude & Physical Health**

### **Gratitude Journaling Intervention in Patients With Stage B Heart Failure**

Redwine, L.S., Henry, B.L., Pung, M.A., Wilson, K., Chinh, K., Jain, S., Rutledge, T., Greenberg, B., Maisel, A., Mills, P.J. (2016). [Pilot Randomized Study of a Gratitude Journaling Intervention on Heart Rate Variability and Inflammatory Biomarkers in Patients With Stage B Heart Failure](#). *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 78(6), 667-76.

Researchers conducted a pilot study among Stage B heart failure patients and found that gratitude journaling improved biomarkers related to their prognosis.

### **The Role of Gratitude in Spiritual Well-Being**

Mills, P.J., Redwine, L., Wilson, K., Pung, M.A., Chinh, K., Greenberg, B.H., Lunde, O., Maisel, A., Raisinghani, A. (2015). [The Role of Gratitude in Spiritual Well-Being in Asymptomatic Heart Failure Patients](#). *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, 2(1), 5-17.

This study examined the role of gratitude in heart failure patients; results suggest gratitude is a mechanism through which spirituality may exert beneficial effects on physical and mental health.

## **Design and baseline data from the Gratitude Research in Acute Coronary Events (GRACE) study**

Huffman, J.C., Beale, E.E., Beach, S.R., Celano, C.M., Belcher, A.M., Moore, S.V., Suarez, L. Gandhi, P.U., Motiwala, S.R., Gaggin, H., & Januzzi, J.L. (2015). [Design and Baseline Data from the Gratitude Research in Acute Coronary Events \(GRACE\) Study](#). *Contemporary Clinical Trials*, 44, 11-19.

The study examined the association between optimism/gratitude at two weeks after an acute coronary event (ACE) and subsequent clinical outcomes. Findings indicate that more grateful people had healthier hearts than their less-grateful counterparts.

## **Gratitude Influences Sleep through the Mechanism of Pre-Sleep Cognitions**

Wood, A. M., Joseph, S., Lloyd, J., & Atkins, S. (2009). [Gratitude Influences Sleep through the Mechanism of Pre-Sleep Cognitions](#). *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 66(1), 43-48.

This study finds that gratitude predicts greater subjective sleep quality and sleep duration, and less sleep latency and daytime dysfunction.

## **Gratitude & Prosocial Behavior**

### **An Adaptation for Altruism?**

McCullough, M. E., Kimeldorf, M. B., & Cohen, A. D. (2008). [An Adaptation for Altruism? The Social Causes, Social Effects, and Social Evolution of Gratitude](#). *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17(4), 281-285.

Provides a look at what gratitude is, where it comes from both socially and evolutionarily, and its effects on others.

### **Gratitude and Prosocial Behavior**

Bartlett, M.Y., & DeSteno, D. (2006). [Gratitude and Prosocial Behavior: Helping When It Costs You](#). *Psychological Science*, 17(4), 319-325.

Finds that feeling gratitude produces kind and helpful behavior, even when that behavior is costly to the individual actor.

# Greater Good Articles, Videos & Quizzes

## Can Gratitude Be Good for Your Heart?

By Paul J. Mills and Laura Redwine | October 25, 2017

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can\\_gratitude\\_be\\_good\\_for\\_your\\_heart](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can_gratitude_be_good_for_your_heart)

## Why Health Professionals Should Cultivate Gratitude

By Leif Haas | July 26, 2017

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why\\_health\\_professionals\\_should\\_cultivate\\_gratitude](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_health_professionals_should_cultivate_gratitude)

## How Gratitude Changes You and Your Brain

By Joel Wong and Joshua Brown | June 6, 2017

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how\\_gratitude\\_changes\\_you\\_and\\_your\\_brain](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_gratitude_changes_you_and_your_brain)

## How Gratitude Motivates Us to Become Better People

By Christina N. Armenta and Sonja Lyubomirsky | May 23, 2017

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how\\_gratitude\\_motivates\\_us\\_to\\_become\\_better\\_people](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_gratitude_motivates_us_to_become_better_people)

## Can Giving Thanks Help Us Heal from Trauma?

By Jeremy Adam Smith | November 26, 2014

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can\\_giving\\_thanks\\_help\\_heal\\_from\\_trauma](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can_giving_thanks_help_heal_from_trauma)

## Can Gratitude Help People with Heart Disease? (VIDEO)

By Jeff Huffman | September 2014 Gratitude Summit

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/can\\_gratitude\\_help\\_people\\_with\\_heart\\_disease](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/can_gratitude_help_people_with_heart_disease)

## The Social Benefits of Gratitude (VIDEO)

By Phil Watkins | September 2014

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/the\\_social\\_benefits\\_of\\_gratitude](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/the_social_benefits_of_gratitude)

## **Can't Get Therapy? Try Gratitude and Kindness**

By Lauren Klein | July 7, 2014

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/cant\\_get\\_therapy\\_try\\_gratitude\\_and\\_kindness](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/cant_get_therapy_try_gratitude_and_kindness)

## **Can Fostering Positive Emotions Help Stop Suicide?**

By Jeremy Adam Smith and Devan Davison | January 15, 2014

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can\\_positive\\_emotions\\_stop\\_suicide](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can_positive_emotions_stop_suicide)

## **Six Habits of Highly Grateful People**

By Jeremy Adam Smith | November 20, 2013

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/six\\_habits\\_of\\_highly\\_grateful\\_people/success](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/six_habits_of_highly_grateful_people/success)

## **Five Ways to Cultivate Gratitude at Work**

By Jeremy Adam Smith | May 16, 2013

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five\\_ways\\_to\\_cultivate\\_gratitude\\_at\\_work](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five_ways_to_cultivate_gratitude_at_work)

## **How Gratitude Can Help You Through Hard Times**

By Robert Emmons | May 13, 2013

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how\\_gratitude\\_can\\_help\\_you\\_through\\_hard\\_times](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_gratitude_can_help_you_through_hard_times)

## **Five Myths About Gratitude**

By Robert Emmons | May 13, 2013

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five\\_myths\\_about\\_gratitude](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five_myths_about_gratitude)

## **Why Gratitude Works (VIDEO)**

By Christine Carter | November 20, 2012

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why\\_gratitude\\_works\\_RH](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_gratitude_works_RH)

## **A “Thnx” a Day Keeps the Doctor Away**

By Emiliana R. Simon-Thomas | December 19, 2012

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/a\\_thnx\\_a\\_day\\_keeps\\_the\\_doctor\\_away](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/a_thnx_a_day_keeps_the_doctor_away)

## **Tips for Keeping a Gratitude Journal**

By Jason Marsh | November 17, 2011

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/tips\\_for\\_keeping\\_a\\_gratitude\\_journal](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/tips_for_keeping_a_gratitude_journal)

## **Why Gratitude is Good**

By Robert Emmons | November 16, 2010

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why\\_gratitude\\_is\\_good](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_gratitude_is_good)

## **Gratitude Quiz**

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take\\_quiz/gratitude](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take_quiz/gratitude)

## **Grateful Organizations Quiz**

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take\\_quiz/grateful\\_organizations](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take_quiz/grateful_organizations)

## **Books**

Fiedel, G., & Jacobson, K. (2016). *Stop-Look-Go: A Grateful Practice Workbook and Gratitude Journal*. Mill Valley, CA: Wink Books.

Using the STOP, LOOK, GO technique gratefully borrowed from Brother David Steindl-Rast, this book offers 32 exercises adapted from A Network for Grateful Living and the Greater Good Science Center that explore all aspects of grateful living

Emmons, R. A. (2016). *The Little Book of Gratitude: Create a Life of Happiness and Wellbeing by Giving Thanks*. London, GB: Octopus Publishing.

This book discusses the benefits of gratitude and teaches easy techniques to foster gratitude every day.

Sacks, O. (2015). *Gratitude*. New York, NY: Random House.

The book chronicles Oliver Sacks' thoughts, wishes, regrets, and feelings of love, happiness, and gratitude even as he faced the cancer that ended his life at age 82.

Emmons, R. A. (2013). *Gratitude Works!* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

The world's leading scientific expert on gratitude offers a step-by-step guide to becoming a more grateful person.

Kralik, J. (2011). *A Simple Act of Gratitude*. New York, NY: Hyperion.  
A memoir on how a man's resolution to write 365 thank you letters in one year changed his life.

Lesowitz, N., & Sammons, M.B. (2009). *Living Life as a Thank You*. New York, NY: Metro Books.  
Presents a simple but comprehensive program for incorporating gratitude into one's life, and reaping the many benefits that come from doing so.

Emmons, R. A. (2007). *Thanks!* New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.  
How the science of gratitude can make you happier.

Emmons, R.A., & McCullough, M.E. (2004). *The Psychology of Gratitude*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.  
A collection of essays by academics on the science of gratitude.

## GGSC Speakers Bureau

The Greater Good Science Center has a number of experts who speak widely on the science of gratitude. They can deliver keynotes, workshops, and other presentations to audiences of various sizes.

Learn more at the GGSC's [Gratitude Speakers Bureau](#). That webpage also includes summaries of talks they have already prepared or delivered.