



Activate Gratitude to Enhance Health

A positive attitude is not just an amiable personality trait that we appreciate in others. In fact, dozens of studies have demonstrated that optimists enjoy better health in important areas including longevity, cancer survival, various physical symptoms and immune function.

Fortunately, we all have some control over our outlook. Practices like choosing a positive perspective, learning to reframe negative thoughts and expressing appreciation have been shown to be highly effective in cultivating the gratitude that supports immunity and optimal health.

- **Reframe:** We can use gratitude and positivity to reframe frustrations and fears that bring unwanted stress to our lives. In the setting of the current health crisis, this is especially helpful. For example, if you are tired of working (and teaching, in many cases) from home, you can reframe by recognizing your good fortune to have a job, a home and time with your children in these challenging times.
- **Connect:** Write a short weekly email to someone in your life expressing gratitude for your connection with them. Be specific about what you appreciate about them and what it means to you.
- **Record:** Take time at the end of your day to think about a couple of things you're grateful for and write them down. Again, the key is to be very specific. "I'm grateful for my work and family" is not going to be that helpful. Instead, reflect on a meaningful moment -- maybe when your daughter told you how much she appreciated you spending more time with her, or when a co-worker thanked you for your skill and compassion. Try to be very detailed in the recollection to rekindle that feeling of gratitude in your heart.

As gentle or simplistic as these practices may seem, a growing body of research shows that activating gratitude can bring better sleep, improved wellbeing, less depression and improved relationships, among other helpful outcomes.



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To learn more about the Institute for Health & Healing or request an appointment, visit myhealthandhealing.org.