SPEAKING OF HEALTH | TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2022

Can expressing gratitude improve your mental, physical health?

TOPICS IN THIS POST

Balance Your Mental And Emotional Health | Behavioral Health | Family Medicine

Expressing gratitude is associated with a host of mental and physical benefits. Studies have shown that feeling thankful can improve sleep, mood and immunity. Gratitude can decrease depression, anxiety, difficulties with chronic pain and risk of disease.

If a pill that could do this, everyone would be taking it. Your brain is designed to problem-solve rather than appreciate. You often must override this design to reap the benefits of gratitude.

What's the right amount of gratitude?

Simply stated, gratitude should be practiced daily — just as you'd take that magic pill if it existed. Try starting your day by thinking of someone you're grateful for as soon as you wake up. It could be appreciating a friend who sends you funny texts, a teacher who recognizes your child's gifts, or the barista who hands you your coffee and shares friendly conversation. Later, thank that person with a text, note or kind word when you see the person.

Behavior changes biology

Remember that behavior changes biology. Positive gestures benefit you by releasing oxytocin, a hormone that helps connect people. Some people call it the love hormone.

You'll also benefit the person on the other end of the gesture. After all, who doesn't like to be thanked for their efforts or just for being who they are? Sharing kindness can make you healthier and happier.

Track your gratitude

Another idea is to keep a gratitude journal. Set aside some time during your day, perhaps while attempting to relax your mind before sleep. Think back on your day and write down the things that went right. Maybe your spouse took care of a household repair, you heard your favorite song on the radio or you saw a double rainbow. Try writing about the many blessings you may have taken for granted, such as having clean water or having certain abilities.

Our lives are full of reasons to feel thankful. Sometimes we need to remember to notice them.

Consider joining Mayo Clinic Health System's Discover Gratitude program. The virtual month-long program consists of daily journaling about thankfulness, mindfulness and kindness on journal sheets. Acknowledging gratitude and being mindful support a positive shift to improve your mental well-being and health.

Read more about gratitude and kindness:

- The art of kindness
- Recharge with a planned mental health day
- Kindness in action brings healthy rewards
- How to create happiness

Amanda Logan is a nurse practitioner in Family Medicine in Janesville, Minnesota.

TOPICS IN THIS POST

Balance Your Mental And Emotional Health | Behavioral Health | Family Medicine

Related Posts

Baby laying on back smiling

Infants have mental health needs, too

How to create happiness

Sunset behind snowy trees

Need motivation to tackle your New Year's resolutions?

POSTED BY

Amanda Logan, C.N.P.
Family Medicine

Recent Posts

SPEAKING OF HEALTH
Don't turn your back on back acne
June 07, 2022

SPEAKING OF HEALTH
What to do about chest acne
March 01, 2022

SPEAKING OF HEALTH
Risks of using expired makeup
December 06, 2021

FEATURED TOPICS

- Behavioral Health
- Cancer
- Children's Health (Pediatrics)
- Exercise and Fitness
- Heart Health
- Men's Health
- Neurosurgery
- Obstetrics and Gynecology
- Orthopedic Health
- Weight Loss and Bariatric Surgery
- Women's Health

Feedback