



The Grateful Brain

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What is gratitude?

The state of being grateful

Gratitude is the act of feeling/communicating appreciation for the people, circumstances, and material possessions in our lives

Gratitude allows us to cherish the present and focus on the abundance rather than the deprivation





The Brain Vs. The Mind

- ▶ **Brain** - organ made up of a network of nearly 100 billion neurons
- ▶ **Mind** – your thoughts, feelings, emotions, etc. How we process all of that.
- ▶ *Thoughts – the way that we talk to ourselves, how you process your experiences and the world around you*

“All that we are is the result of what we have thought. The mind is everything. What we think, we become.”

~ Buddha

Thoughts – Mood - Gratitude



Many of us have our “inner critic” – how do you think it serves you?



We live in a world that teaches us to be grateful for (measurable) skills, and not characteristics, such as kindness, vulnerability, generosity, etc



WHAT ARE YOU CHOOSING TO LOOK AT?

Thoughts = Mood

- ▶ We find ourselves often thinking about what we DON'T have
- ▶ The comparison factor has never been stronger—technology, (the façade of) social media. We are constantly reminded of what we “should be/have, etc”
- ▶ As a society, we are more stressed than ever before, and more unhappy as well



Thoughts = Mood

These thoughts are dumping chemicals into our brain, such as cortisol

What is cortisol? Our stress hormone, or internal alarm system. Think of it in conjunction with our flight or fight response

Cortisol is only meant to last a very short amount of time– meant to protect you

Heightened levels of cortisol can lead to sleep issues, anxiety, depression, etc



The Science of Gratitude



Practicing gratitude changes our limbic system – part of the brain where our emotions come from



Gratitude produces our “feel good” hormones, such as dopamine, oxytocin, and endorphins



Words are **POWERFUL**– there are connections happening in our brain – the more you think it, the more you link it

The Science of Gratitude

The WHY of gratitude is important in changing the way your brain works:

Ex. I am grateful for this sunset, **because** it reminds me of vacations when I was a kid.

Ex. I am grateful I was able to attend this event, **because** it shows I am focused on my self care/mental health, etc



The Science of Gratitude

Gratitude opens the door, the power, the wisdom, the creativity of the universe. You open the door through gratitude.

DEEPAK CHOPRA

Some spiritual teachers suggest that the more we practice gratitude the more the universe gives us to be grateful for

Additional Benefits of Gratitude

- ▶ **Mental/Psychological** - Fosters optimism, higher self esteem & motivation, less anger, & reduced levels of stress and depression
- ▶ **Physical/Physiological** - Improved sleep, reduced blood pressure, stronger immune system, & more energy
- ▶ **Social** - Increased empathy, compassion, better relationships, more willing to try something new



Practicing Gratitude

- ▶ Start a gratitude journal.
- ▶ Studies shows that individuals who enter 1-3 entries a few times a week report feeling happier. Plus, it's kind of cool to look back on later 😊
- ▶ Use gratitude as coping skill



What If I Can't Find Anything To Be Grateful For?

Start small - What do you appreciate? A favorite show, the comfort of your bed, your pet, the sound of something...

Are you in good health? A good night's sleep! It can be anything.

Name three things you take for granted but are thankful for

Identify someone who has had a positive impact on your life



Practicing Gratitude

Important to find gratitude in the challenges life throws our way – where the growth occurs

Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* – In 1991 it was named one of the 10 most influential books in the US.

Father of Logotherapy – finding meaning, “adopting an exemplary attitude in situations of unavoidable suffering”

“How lucky am I to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.”

~ Winnie the Pooh



Self Love & Self Compassion

What is self love and self compassion?

Why are these so important?

What do they look like?

How do I improve on it?



Self Love & Self Compassion

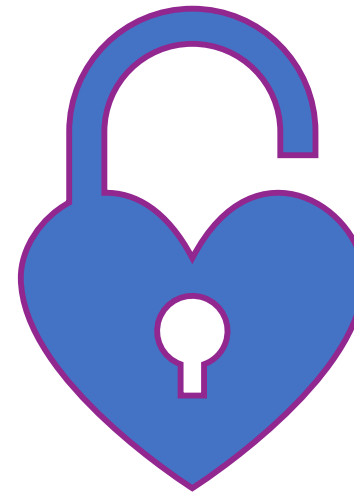
Leads to a more authentic sense of self,
more acceptance of our imperfections

Creates emotional resilience – it's the kind
way we respond to our suffering

How have you incorporated this into your self
talk?

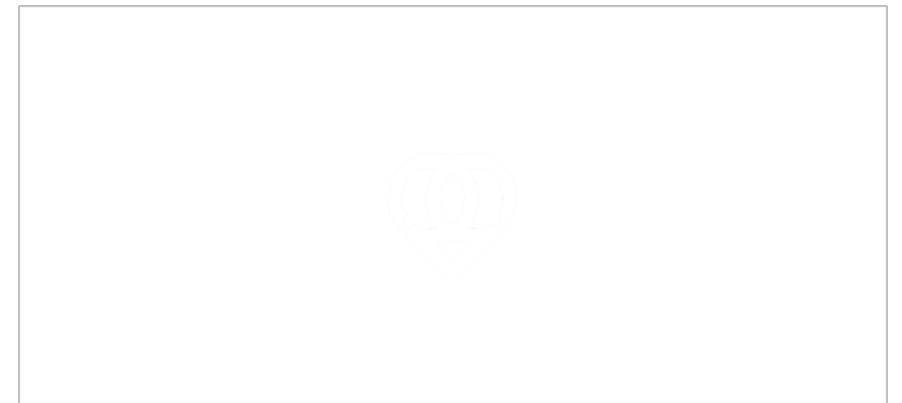
Self Compassion Tips

- ▶ Treat yourself as you'd treat a friend or anyone you care about
- ▶ Gain perspective : gratitude
- ▶ Practice forgiveness and acceptance, even for your imperfections
- ▶ Implementing more self care – what would that look like?



Practicing Gratitude

- ▶ Acknowledge gratitude for your individual strengths, attributes, etc
- ▶ What is it about yourself that you are grateful for? (Self love, self compassion)
- ▶ Ex. I am grateful I tackled my anxiety yesterday, because it shows I am courageous.



Conclusion

“Being thankful is not always experienced as a natural state of existence, we must work at it, akin to a type of strength training for the heart.”

– **Larissa Gomez**



Resources:

Blogs: <https://www.promises.com/addiction-blog/journaling-in-recovery/>

<https://www.promises.com/addiction-blog/power-of-journaling/>

<https://www.promises.com/addiction-blog/5-steps-to-cultivating-an-attitude-of-gratitude-in-addiction-recovery/>

Articles: <https://www.tonyrobbins.com/mind-meaning/adopt-abundance-mindset/>

<https://www.skipprichard.com/5-ways-to-cultivate-an-attitude-of-gratitude/>

Resources:

Helpful Tips: <https://getpocketrehab.com/Journaling-in-Recovery-A-List-of-Addiction-Recovery-Journal-Prompts--Tips-to-Get-Started>

<https://positiveroutines.com/the-power-of-gratitude/>

Apps: Gratitude, Live Happy, 365 Gratitude, Day One Journal, & Grateful: A Gratitude Journal

Questions?



P R O M I S E S
B E H A V I O R A L H E A L T H