

Thanksgiving – Being Grateful

Thanksgiving or being grateful is a very old tradition. People who consciously count their blessings tend to be happier and less depressed. One way of expressing gratitude is to use a gratitude journal. Research indicates that those who regularly (daily) practice gratitude journal writing reported significantly better mental health. Gratitude writing can be beneficial not just for healthy, well-adjusted individuals, but also for those who struggle with mental health concerns. In fact, it seems, practicing gratitude on top of receiving psychological counseling carries greater benefits than counseling alone, even when that gratitude practice is brief.

1. Gratitude unshackles us from toxic emotions

Gratitude journal writing produces better mental health by shifting one's attention away from toxic emotions, such as resentment and envy. When you write about how grateful you are to others and how much other people have blessed your life, it might become considerably harder for you to ruminate on your negative experiences.

2. Gratitude helps even if you don't share it

The mental health benefits of gratitude journal writing are not entirely dependent on actually communicating that gratitude to another person. So, it can be a very private exercise! You can write a letter of gratitude to someone and keep it in your journal. You can decide later whether to send it. But the mere act of writing the letter can help you appreciate the people in your life and shift your focus away from negative feelings and thoughts.

3. Gratitude's benefits take time

It's important to note that the mental health benefits of gratitude writing may not emerge immediately, but gradually surface and increase over time. The bottom line is this: If you participate in a gratitude writing activity, don't be too surprised if you don't feel dramatically better immediately after the

writing. Be patient and remember that the benefits of gratitude might take time to kick in.

4. Gratitude has lasting effects on the brain

Functional MRI scanner shows that when people feel more grateful, their brain activity is distinct from brain activity related to guilt. When people are generally more grateful, they show greater neural sensitivity in the medial prefrontal cortex, a brain area associated with learning and decision making. People who engage in gratitude journaling are better learners and problem solvers!

Happy Thanksgiving and Gratitude Journaling!

