

Healthy Living

How to find gratitude

By **Mitra Malek** | August 10, 2016

Are you happy?

Maybe in this moment, yes, but, without a doubt, it'll pass. Then it will come back. And pass. The loop goes on and on for as long as you live.

A better gauge of wellbeing is to ask if you're content – or satisfied, to put it another way. No matter what's going on in your life, you can find contentment.

The way to it is gratitude.

Not sure what to be thankful for?

Start with the fact that you can breathe. Or feel or taste or hear or see – and if you're missing any of your senses, be thankful for the others. What's more, you can even be thankful *you're missing* one of your senses. Yes, that's right: In some cases, one sense **can be heightened** for the very fact that you're missing another, creating a superpower sense.

Be thankful for how hard your body works to keep you functioning – including when you're sick. It never stops trying to bring you back into equilibrium, even if you have a severe illness or debilitation (if you doubt it, reread the previous paragraph and click on the link.)

Be thankful for that tasty meal you just ate – or, if it wasn't tasty, the fact that you had food to eat. Then think about what it took to get that food to you – all the people, plants or animals involved – and be thankful for that.

Be thankful for coffee, or the car that got you to work, or clouds that form pretty shapes for you to look at on the way to work.

The list is endless.

“Gratitude is so important because it keeps our attitude in proper perspective,” says Tekeela Belk, a health coach and nurse with [Unum](#).

“When we are grateful, our focal point shifts from the negative to the positive.”

[Plenty of research](#) makes the case for gratitude’s link to wellbeing. But you don’t really need science to believe the connection.

One way to nudge yourself toward an attitude of gratitude is to practice it.

Every night before you go to bed list three things you’re thankful for. The same three things can be on your list every night. But odds are more than three will pop into your mind (feel free to use what’s in the paragraphs above). Don’t make things complicated. Again: There is always – always – something to be thankful for.

If you already have a simple gratitude practice, try taking it to the next level.

Thank someone, especially someone you never thanked quite the way you should have or wish you had. Write them a note. Even if you don’t send it, the act of writing it is expressing gratitude. If writing isn’t your thing, tell them. If neither feels comfortable for you, thank them mentally.

The point is to dwell on the good, not the bad. And that’s something anyone can do – yet another thing to be thankful for.

Journalist Mitra Malek writes about wellness, fitness and innovation. She’s taught yoga regularly since 2006 and was a senior editor for Yoga Journal magazine. Learn more at mitramalek.com.

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