

Find three good things each day



People who are grateful tend to be happier, healthier and more fulfilled. Being grateful can help people cope with stress and can even have a beneficial effect on heart rate. This action is easy to do yet its benefits have been scientifically proven. In tests, people who tried it each night for just one week were happier and less depressed one month, three months and six months later.

From ancient cultures to the latest science, gratitude is known to be good for us and those around us. Yet it isn't always our automatic response and we often take the good things in our lives for granted. So we have to consciously learn to get into the habit of being grateful.

Science is showing that gratitude is important for how good we feel psychologically and socially. It increases how much positive emotion we feel and decreases negative emotion. It raises our overall satisfaction with life and helps us have an overall positive outlook. It has also been shown to reduce health complaints and help us cope with difficulties. It even seems to reduce the importance we place on material goods. And contrary to what we may think, it also appears that it could increase our ability to achieve our goals.

Why?

Why does it work? We have a natural focus on what goes wrong in our daily lives often going over and over these things in our head. We are quick to notice even the smallest of problems, yet we rarely spend any time at all dwelling on the good things. Things that brought us a quick smile or felt good are all too often forgotten or perhaps not even noticed in the first place.

This action is simple but incredibly powerful. It's about taking the time to notice the good things in our lives and get the more from these. What's more, if parents remember to talk about the things they're grateful for, this can also help their children learn to think about the good things and hopefully get the benefit of a gratitude habit for the rest of their lives.

This action involves consciously spending a few minutes each day focusing on some of the good things that happen to us. By doing this we start to notice what goes right as well as wrong in our lives. Even on a bad day there are some good things that happen, however small.

How?

1. **Every night** - before you go to bed, think back over your day and remember three good things that happened - things that went well, that you enjoyed or were grateful for. These can be small (e.g. a delicious sandwich or a child smiling on the bus) or of bigger importance for you. You'll probably find it varies. Try doing this for a week to start with.
2. **Note them down** - this is important. You may want to get a small notebook just for this purpose - or you can track them online using an app or website (see links below).
3. **Think about why** - for each thing you're grateful for, write down why it happened and why you feel good about it. This may feel a bit tricky at first but you'll soon get the hang.
4. **Look back** - after a week, have a look back on what you've written. How does it feel when you look at all these good things? Do you notice any themes?
5. **Keep it up** - try keeping it up for another couple of weeks at least. Many people find it becomes a bedtime habit. After a while you may find that you don't need to do it every night. Three times a week or even once a week might be enough. You may also find that you start to appreciate the good things more as they happen.

Here are some examples of good things, including observations on why they happened and why they were good:

- "Bumped into Dave - haven't seen him for ages. I'd forgotten how much he makes me laugh"
- "Really enjoyed lunch today - lovely to grab 20 minutes in the park and chat with Jo instead of eating at my desk. It happened because I thought it would be nice and suggested it. And Jo liked the idea too!"
- "Hooray - the kids did their homework without me having to remind them (too much). It was because we agreed to a quiet hour after tea... which is finally becoming part of the routine"

*Note: This could be a family activity at the end of the day or at a meal. Ask family members if they can think of their own "three good things." Young children may need your help at some suggestions, but you'll be surprised how quickly they get the idea.