

HappierHuman

- Home

The 31 Benefits of Gratitude You Didn't Know About: How Gratitude Can Change Your Life

by AA

Do you want more from your life?

More happiness? Better health? Deeper relationships? Increased productivity?

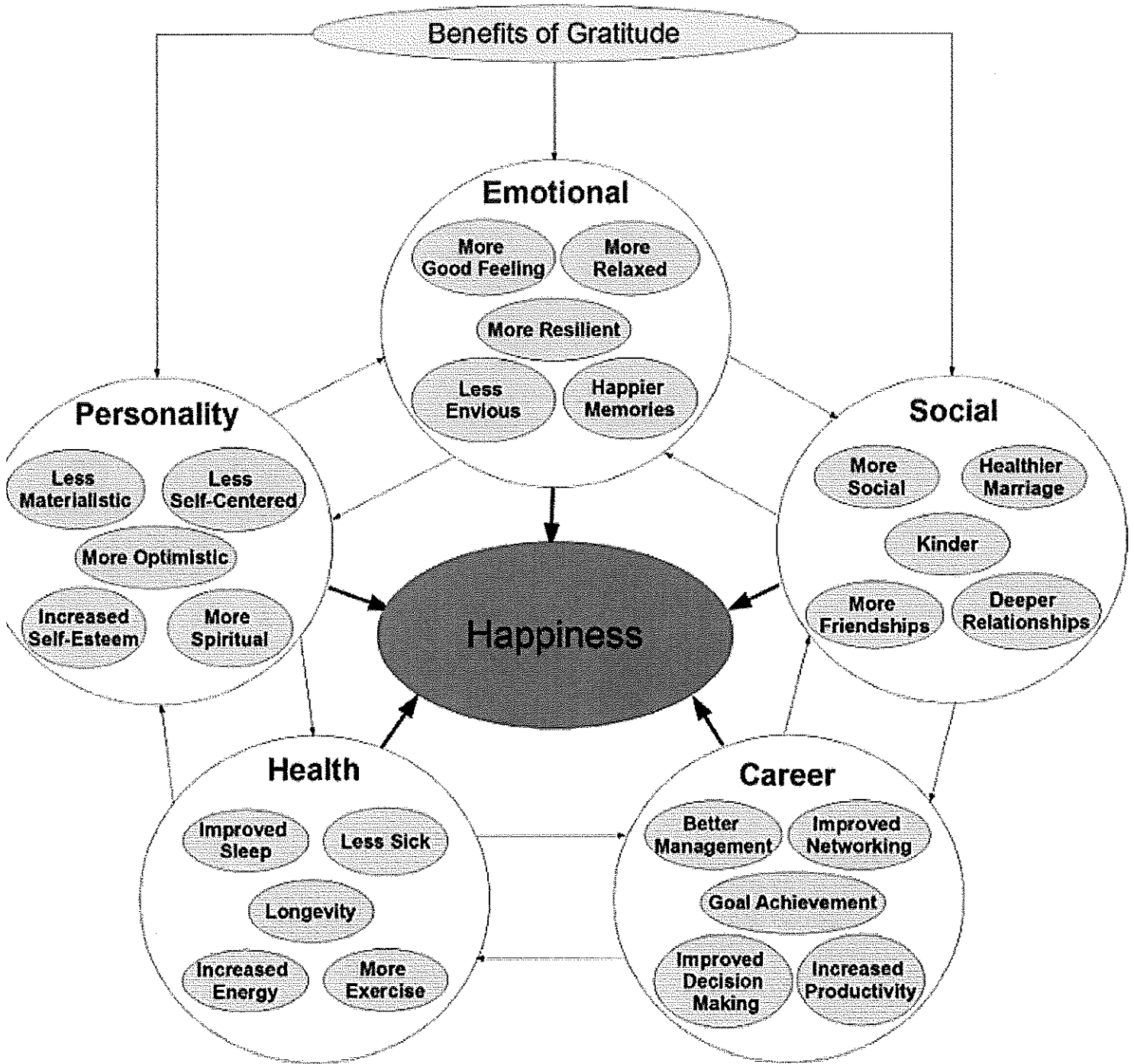
What if I told you that just one thing can help you in all of those areas?

An Attitude of Gratitude

What the heck? Gratitude? Is this a Christian blog?

No. I'm not even religious. When I first started looking into gratitude, I wasn't expecting much.

I was wrong:



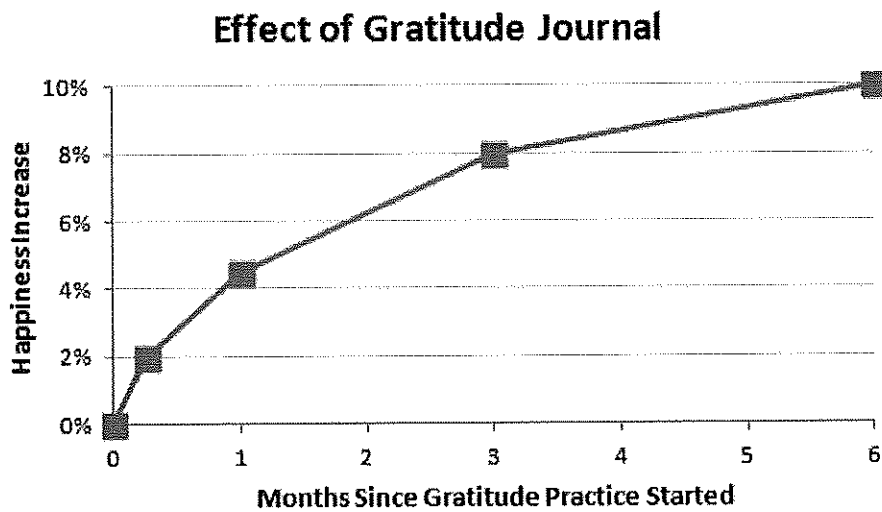
Seriously? All that? Yes. This list of benefits was compiled by aggregating the results of more than 40 research studies on gratitude.

1. Gratitude makes us happier.

A five-minute a day gratitude journal can increase your long-term well-being by more than 10 percent.^{a1,a2,a3} That's the same impact as doubling your income!^{a4}

How can a free five minute activity compare? Gratitude improves our health, relationships, emotions, personality, and career.

Sure, having more money can be pretty awesome, but because of hedonic adaptation we quickly get used to it and stop having as much fun and happiness as we did at first.



How can 5 minutes a day have such a large impact? (click to show)

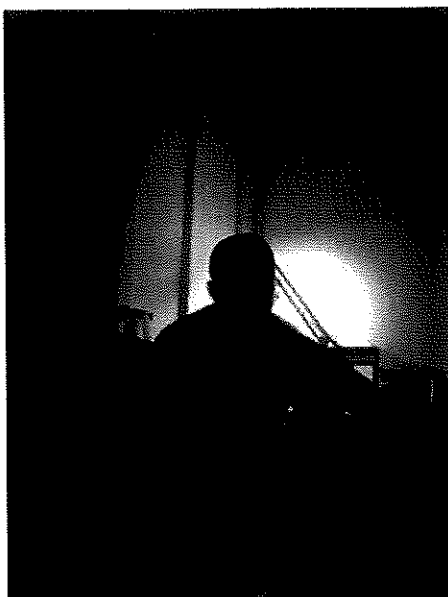
Hedonic what?

Why does it take several months?

2. Gratitude makes people like us.

Gratitude generates social capital – in two studies with 243 total participants, those who were 10% more grateful than average had 17.5% more social capital.^{b1}

Gratitude makes us nicer, more trusting, more social, and more appreciative. As a result, it helps us make more friends, deepen our existing relationships, and improve our marriage.^{b2}



or



Bonus question: Is that first picture actually of me? Hm... I wonder...

Answer:

3. Gratitude makes us healthier.

Check it out:

Benefits at a Glance

Results ¹	Study
Keeping a gratitude journal caused participants to report 16% fewer physical symptoms, 19% more time spent exercising, 10% less physical pain, 8% more sleep, and 25% increased sleep quality.	Counting Blessings Versus Burdens
The emotions of appreciation and gratitude shown to induce the relaxation response.	The Grateful Heart
A gratitude visit reduced depressive symptoms by 35% for several weeks; a gratitude journal lowered depressive symptoms by 30%+ for as long as the practice was continued.	Positive Psychology Progress
Patients with hypertension were instructed to count their blessings once a week. There was a significant decrease in their systolic blood pressure.	Gratitude: Effects on Perspectives and Blood Pressure
Gratitude correlated with improved sleep quality ($r = .29$), less time required to fall asleep ($r = .20$), and increased sleep duration ($r = .14$).	Gratitude Influences Sleep Through the Mechanism of Pre-Sleep Cognitions
Levels of gratitude significantly correlated with vitality and energy.	Multiple Studies

There is even reason to believe gratitude can extend your lifespan by a few months or even years.^{f2,f3,f4}

4. Gratitude boosts our career.

Gratitude makes you a more effective manager,^{c1,c2} helps you network, increases your decision making capabilities, increases your productivity, and helps you get mentors and proteges.^{b1} As a result, gratitude helps you achieve your career goals, as well as making your workplace a more friendly and enjoyable place to be.^{a2, b2}

Do you think this is effective?

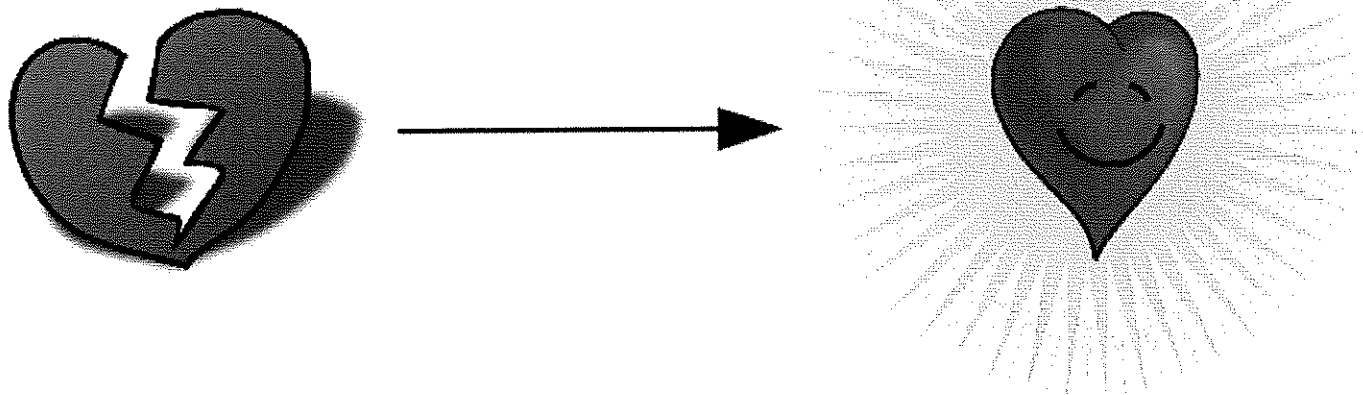
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DlnObIFBCY4>

I'm not suggesting that criticism and self-focus don't have a place in the workplace, but I think we're overdoing it.

65% of Americans didn't receive recognition in the workplace last year.^{c3}

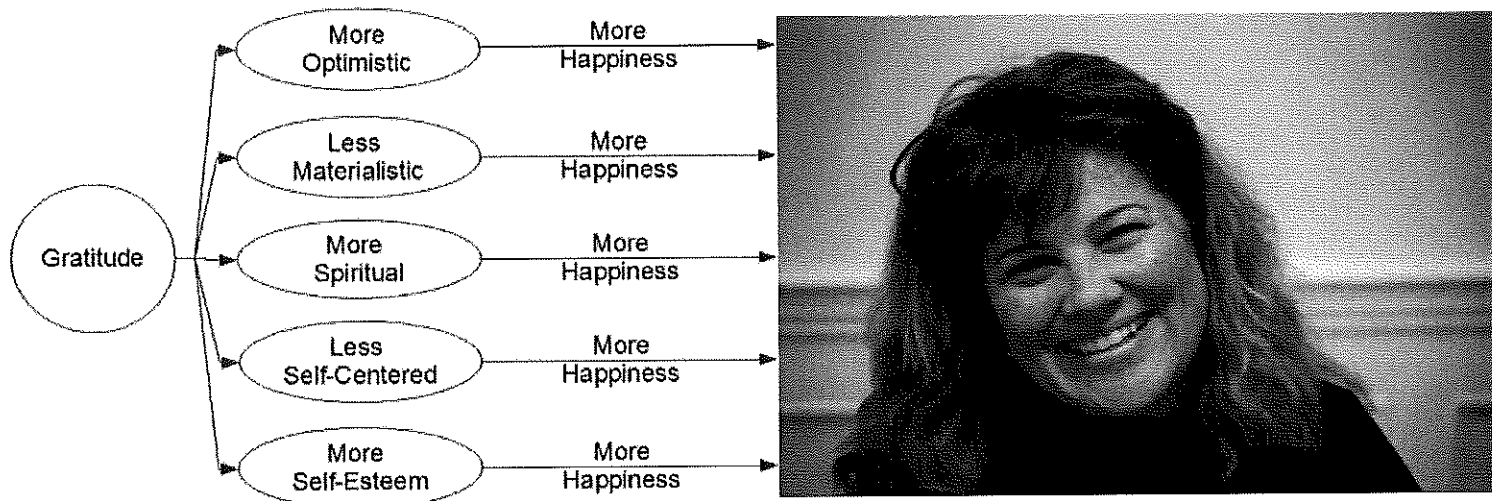
5. Gratitude strengthens our emotions.

Gratitude reduces feelings of envy, makes our memories happier, lets us experience good feelings, and helps us bounce back from stress.^{b2,d1,d2,d3}



6. Gratitude develops our personality.

It really does, and in potentially life-changing ways.^{a2,b2,d2,e1,e2}



If you're a man, don't worry; gratitude won't transform you into a woman.

Convinced of the benefits? Sign up for [The Gratitude Hack](#), the course I created with the sole focus of helping you live a happier, more grateful life.

Not convinced? Want to know the details or explore the science that backs up these claims? Click below to go to the specific category or benefit that interests you, or just continue scrolling.

- Personality

- ↳ 7. More Optimistic
- ↳ 8. Less Materialistic
- ↳ 9. More Spiritual
- ↳ 10. Less Self-Centered
- ↳ 11. More Self-Esteem

- Health

- ↳ 12. Better Sleep
- ↳ 13. Keeps The Doctor Away
- ↳ 14. Longevity
- ↳ 15. More Energy
- ↳ 16. More Exercise

- Emotional

- ↳ 17. More Resilience
- ↳ 18. More Good Feeling
- ↳ 19. Happier Memories
- ↳ 20. Less Envy
- ↳ 21. More Relaxed

- Social

- ↳ 22. More Friendly
- ↳ 23. Better Marriage
- ↳ 24. More Respect
- ↳ 25. More Friends
- ↳ 26. Deeper Relationships

- Career

- ↳ 27. Better Management
- ↳ 28. Increased Networking
- ↳ 29. Goal Achievement
- ↳ 30. Improved Decision Making
- ↳ 31. Increased Productivity

Click [here](#) to jump to the comments section.

Personality

7. Gratitude makes us more optimistic.

Gratitude is strongly correlated with optimism. Optimism in turn makes us happier, improves our health, and has been shown to increase lifespan by as much as a few years.^{f1,f2,f3,f4} I'd say a 5 minute a day gratitude journal would be worth it just for this benefit.

Show me the science. (click to show)

How does gratitude increase optimism? (click to show)

8. Gratitude reduces materialism.

Materialism is strongly correlated with reduced well-being and increased rates of mental disorder.^{g1} There's nothing wrong with wanting more. The problem with materialism is that it makes people feel less competent, reduces feelings of relatedness and gratitude, reduces their ability to appreciate and enjoy the good in life, generates negative emotions, and makes them more self-centered.^{g1,g2,g3}

Why is materialism negatively correlated with happiness and well-being?

How does gratitude reduce materialism?

Will gratitude make me lazy?

Gratitude has caused me to focus less on things that don't matter, like making money, and more on the things that do, like my family and this blog. I think that's a good thing.

9. Gratitude increases spiritualism.

Spiritual transcendence is *highly correlated* with feelings of gratitude. That is – the more spiritual you are, the more likely you are to be grateful.

This is for two reasons:

1. All major religions espouse gratitude as a virtue.^{h1}
2. Spirituality spontaneously gives rise to grateful behavior.

I believe the opposite to also be true, that gratitude spontaneously gives rise to spiritual attribution, helping one feel closer to God or other religious entities. I am irreligious, and have found gratitude practices to make my spiritual position difficult – those moments when I feel intense gratitude make me want to believe in a benevolent God. My solution has been to re-direct my feelings towards Lady Luck.

Why does spirituality give rise to grateful behavior?

10. Gratitude makes us less self-centered.

I'll be totally honest, I'm a self-centered twat. I'm a lot better now that I've brought gratitude into my life, but I still spend way too much time thinking about myself, and too little thinking about others. I expect this to change – because

of my compassion and gratitude practices I am starting to have spontaneous urges to help others.

This is because the very nature of gratitude is to focus on others (on *their* acts of benevolence). In this regard, gratitude practice can be better than self-esteem therapy. Self-esteem therapy focuses the individual back on themselves: I'm smart, I look good, I can succeed, etc....

That can work, but it can also make us narcissistic or even back-fire and lower self-esteem.ⁱ¹

11. Gratitude increases self-esteem.

Imagine a world where no one helps you. Despite your asking and pleading, no one helps you.

Now imagine a world where many people help you all of the time for no other reason than that they like you. In which world do you think you would have more self-esteem? Gratitude helps to create a world like that.

How does gratitude create a more supportive social dynamic?

Health

12. Gratitude improves your sleep.

Gratitude increases sleep quality, reduces the time required to fall asleep, and increases sleep duration. Said differently, gratitude can help with insomnia.^{a2,j1}

The key is what's on our minds as we're trying to fall asleep. If it's worries about the kids, or anxiety about work, the level of stress in our body will increase, reducing sleep quality, keeping us awake, and cutting our sleep short.

If it's thinking about a few things we have to be grateful for today, it will induce the relaxation response, knock us out, and keep us that way.

Yes – gratitude is a (safe and free) sleep aid.

I don't believe you!

13. Gratitude keeps you away from the doctor.

Gratitude can't cure cancer (neither can positive-thinking), but it can strengthen your physiological functioning.

Positive emotion improves health. The details are complicated, but the overall picture is not – if you want to improve your health, improve your mind. This confidence comes from 137 research studies.

Gratitude is a positive emotion. It's no far stretch that some of the benefits (e.g. better coping & management of terminal conditions like cancer and HIV,^{k1,k2} faster recovery from certain medical procedures, positive changes in immune system functioning,^{k3} more positive health behavior,^{k4,k5} etc...) apply to gratitude as well.

In fact, some recent science shows just that – those who engage in gratitude practices have been shown to feel less pain, go to the doctor less often, have lower blood pressure, and be less likely to develop a mental disorder.^{a1,a2,k6}