



# Gratitude

Thankfulness

## What Is Gratitude?

Gratitude is an emotion expressing appreciation for what one has—as opposed to, for instance, a consumer-driven emphasis on what one *wants* or thinks they *need*. Tossing off the half-hearted "thanks" won't cut it; deep gratitude has to come from within and in a meaningful way. This spotlights the highly social aspect of feeling grateful. Gratitude is also getting a great deal of attention as a facet of positive psychology: Practicing gratitude means paying attention to what we are thankful for to the degree of feeling more kind and compassionate toward the world at large. It can motivate people to make positive changes in their lives. Studies show that people can deliberately cultivate gratitude by literally counting their blessings and writing letters of thanks, for example. This proactive acknowledgement can increase well-being, health, and happiness. Being grateful—and especially the expression of it—is also associated with increased energy, optimism, and empathy.



## The Benefits of Gratitude

Feeling grateful starts with an acknowledgement that life is good and rewarding. Such positive thinking can be motivating. Waking in the morning and repeating, "It's great to be alive," is a good place to start. This bountiful emotion that life is abundant makes a person feel grateful toward loved ones, colleagues, animals and, of course, mother nature. There is also utility in gratitude such as making amends or solving issues at hand. Reciprocity is not needed in feeling gratitude, which has a karmic quality in and of itself. The receiver is compelled to pay the goodness forward, generating positivity all around.

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