

## Expressing Gratitude Can Reduce Your Stress

These days most adults and many kids are leading stressful lives. Some have more pressures than others, but stress is relative and depending on our circumstances and overall state of mind, it can have detrimental effects on our health.

There are a number of ways to reduce stress, including exercise and meditation, but just taking time to sit down and acknowledge everything that you have to be grateful for in your life can have a positive effect on your stress levels.

In fact, gratitude is the new thing in stress reduction. Wellness blogs and health and fitness magazines are recommending the act of writing down what you're thankful for in journals.

There are even gratitude-specific journals and apps that remind you to write down what you have to be thankful for.

### What's going on?

When people feel stressed and anxious, it floods our bodies with stress hormones like cortisol. Over time, if you're continually stressed it can have a detrimental effect on your health, including high blood pressure and inflammation.

However, a number of studies have found that expressing gratitude for what we have results in a feeling of well-being that can reverse the effects of the stress hormones.

Various studies have found that giving thanks and counting blessings can:

- Help you sleep better.
- Reduce stress.
- Improve your interpersonal relationships.
- Reduce materialism and improve generosity among adolescents.
- Help you choose healthier eating options.

Other studies have hinted at the fact that it can lower the risk of depression in some people.

If you think that this practice can help you, you can practice the art of gratitude. The psychology journal *Prevention* has the following tips:

**Start a gratitude journal** – This is the most common method. Psychologists recommend that you write a few items in your journal every day. But don't just write whatever comes to mind. To get the most out of this exercise, sit down and think about what you are grateful for.

Be as specific as possible, like "I'm grateful for the young man who opened the door for me when both of my hands were full and I couldn't reach my keys."

**Focus on little surprises** ▯ Of course you are thankful for your family, home and your health. But sometimes small things can really give you a new perspective on life and human kindness. Be grateful for those small things, like the guy who ran out to you after you left one of your grocery bags in the store.

**Give yourself reminders** ▯ Remind yourself to stop and smell the roses and appreciate the good things in your life. You might think of something you're grateful for every time you open a door ▯ for example, sunlight through the window, a friend bearing coffee, a new dishwasher, kid jokes.

**Go mobile** ▯ As mentioned, there are a number of apps that help you express gratitude. One such app is Grateful: A Gratitude Journal, which pings you with prompts to think about all you could appreciate.

**Say it out loud** ▯ Don't pass up the chance to tell someone how much you appreciate them and what they have done for you. That will really put a smile on their face and make their day. And that's good for both them and you.

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