



GRATITUDE: A TOOL TO REDUCE STRESS

CULTIVATING GRATITUDE IS ONE OF THE SIMPLER ROUTES TO A GREATER SENSE OF EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING.

When we express gratitude, our brain releases dopamine and serotonin, the two crucial neurotransmitters responsible for our emotions, and they make us feel 'good'. They enhance our mood immediately, making us feel happy from the inside. By consciously practicing gratitude every day, we can help these neural pathways to strengthen and ultimately create a permanent grateful and positive nature within ourselves which builds our inner strength to combat stress.

WHAT IS GRATITUDE?

In its simplest form, gratitude refers to a 'state of thankfulness' or a 'state of being grateful'.

Gratitude builds emotional resilience by:

- Helping us to see the positive things in life
- Fighting the negative ruminations and rebuilding pessimistic thoughts with optimistic ones
- Staying grounded and accepting the present situation, even if that is a harsh reality
- Identifying and focusing only on solutions
- Maintaining good health by regulating our metabolic functioning and by controlling the hormonal imbalances
- Sustaining relationships and appreciating people who are there for us. As a result, we feel more loved, cared for, and more hopeful.

Gratitude takes practice like any other skill. Here are some ways to cultivate gratitude on a regular basis.

- **Write a thank-you note.** You can make yourself happier and nurture your relationship with another person by writing a thank-you letter expressing your enjoyment and appreciation of that person's impact on your life. Make a habit of sending at least one gratitude letter a month. Once in a while, write one to yourself.
- **Thank someone mentally.** No time to write? It may help just to think about someone who has done something nice for you, and mentally thank the individual.
- **Keep a gratitude journal.** Make it a habit to write down or share with a loved one your thoughts about the gifts you've received each day.
- **Count your blessings.** Pick a time every week to sit down and write about your blessings — reflecting on what went right or what you are grateful for. Sometimes it helps to pick a number — such as three to five things — that you will identify each week. As you write, be specific and think about the sensations you felt when something good happened to you.
- **Meditate.** Mindfulness meditation involves focusing on the present moment without judgment. Although people often focus on a word or phrase (such as "peace"), it is also possible to focus on what you're grateful for (the warmth of the sun, a pleasant sound, etc.).