



***Scientists Show How Gratitude
Literally Alters The Human Heart
And Molecular Structure Of The Brain
Part 1***

Gratitude is a funny thing. In some parts of the world, somebody who gets a clean drink of water, some food, or a worn out pair of shoes can be extremely grateful. Meanwhile, somebody else who has all the necessities they need to live can be found complaining about something. What we have today is what we once wanted before, but there is a lingering belief out there that obtaining material possessions is the key to happiness. Sure, this may be true, but that happiness is temporary. The truth is that happiness is an inside job.

It's a matter of perspective, and in a world where we are constantly made to feel like we are lacking and always 'wanting' more, it can be difficult to achieve or experience actual happiness. Many of us are always looking toward external factors to experience joy and happiness, when really it's all about having an attitude of gratitude. This changes the molecular structure of the brain, keeps gray matter functioning, and makes us healthier and happier. When you feel happiness, the central nervous system is affected. You are more peaceful, less reactive and less resistant. Now that's a really cool way of taking care of your well-being.

There are many studies showing that people who count their blessings tend to be far happier and experience less depression. For one study, researchers recruited people with mental health difficulties, including people suffering from anxiety and depression. The study involved nearly 300 adults who were randomly divided into three groups. This study came from the University of California, Berkeley.

All groups received counselling services, but the first group was also instructed to write one letter of gratitude to another person every week for three weeks, whereas the second group was asked to write about their deepest thoughts and feelings about negative experiences. The third group did not do any writing activity.

What did they find? Compared to the participants who wrote about negative experiences or only received counselling, those who wrote gratitude letters reported significantly better mental health for up to 12 weeks after the writing exercise ended.

This suggests that gratitude writing can be beneficial not just for healthy, well-adjusted individuals, but also for those who struggle with mental health concerns. In fact, it seems, practicing gratitude on top of receiving psychological counseling carries greater benefits than counseling alone, even when that gratitude practice is brief.

Researchers from Berkeley identified how gratitude might actually work on our minds and bodies. They provided four insights from their research suggesting what causes the psychological benefits of gratitude.

- Gratitude unshackles us from toxic emotions
- Gratitude helps even if you don't share it
- Gratitude's benefits take time & practice. You might not feel it right away.
- Gratitude has lasting effects on the brain

To be continued

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