



## Principle 19 - Gratitude

Not too long ago, one of my clients was struggling with severe anxiety. She was making progress on her physical concerns, but her anxiety created emotional havoc that was overwhelming her life and her relationships. I suggested she begin keeping a gratitude journal, and promised she would see changes in her life in 30 days. She did start keeping a gratitude journal, writing down at least three things she was grateful for every day. Two weeks later, she came to see me, very excited because her "luck had changed." She had a new job offer that was perfect for her, and other areas of her life that had been disturbing her were in the process of changing for the better. She kept reporting back on the positive changes in her life as she kept the gratitude journal over the next several months.

How do you see your life with gratitude? How does gratitude change your wellness? One old but very true principle is that we get more of what we focus on. When we focus on the blessings in our lives, on what good is happening, on the kindness of others, on what is going right, on our daily needs being met, we get more of these things, and are blessed more, sometimes in unexpected ways.

You already know how powerful the effect of the mind is on the body. If our mind is filled with gratitude, our body is strengthened with that gratitude. Gratitude has been shown to improve immune function. Speaking a prayer of gratitude over our food has been documented to improve the energy of the food. When we are focused on gratitude for our food, we are more likely to notice the good smells, the colors, and enjoy our food more. Some research indicates that gratitude likely improves our ability to cope with challenges, make progress toward our goals, and take better care of ourselves. Science has shown that grateful people experience fewer aches and pains and report feeling healthier than other people.

What if you were grateful for your body? Instead of focusing on what is wrong with our body, if we notice and express gratitude for our body carrying us through this life, we will feel much better. Winona learned this as she found out that fat is one way our body stores toxins to protect us from serious illness, and she became grateful for the fat that protected her when she struggled with obesity. This gratitude helped her then be able to release the extra weight, and be grateful for her body's well being.

Our emotions can be just as toxic as any external chemical. Gratitude reduces toxic emotions, ranging from envy and resentment to frustration and regret. Gratitude reduces depression and increases happiness. It reduces aggression as it increases empathy. It also increases our mental resilience and ability to overcome trauma. Trauma is linked to many illnesses, so gratitude can be a major factor in staying well.

Grateful people sleep better! When you take time to write down a few grateful thoughts before bed, you will sleep better and longer. This is also an important part of being well for the long run.

I invite you to start your gratitude journal today, and experience the change in your life within the next 30 days. Perhaps you could write down some gratitude thoughts each night before bed.