

## What's so good about gratitude?

grat·i·tude

*/ˈgrædə,t(y)ood/*

*noun*

the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.  
"she expressed her gratitude to the committee for their support"

Did you know that the expression of gratitude changes your brain?

Scientists have long understood the power of gratitude, but only recently have they been able to understand why it has such holistic healing benefits. In one study it was found that when people felt more grateful, their brain activity was distinct from brain activity related to guilt and the desire to help a cause.

More specifically, it was found that when people who are generally more grateful gave more money to a cause, they showed greater neural sensitivity in the front of the brain (prefrontal cortex), a brain area associated with learning and decision-making.

Gratitude produced greater activation in the front part of the brain (prefrontal cortex) when they experienced gratitude in the MRI scanner. This is striking as this effect lasted three months after the experiment began, indicating that simply expressing gratitude may have lasting effects on the brain.

Another study showed increased activity in several areas of the brain. Activity in these regions has also been linked to reward, morality, and social connections — meaning these parts stimulate happiness and play a role in how you make moral decisions and judge other people. These areas of the brain are also involved in self-processing.

While not conclusive, this finding suggests that practicing gratitude may help train the brain to be more sensitive to the experience of gratitude down the line. Being grateful leads to a happier brain.

So, take 60 seconds daily to find what you are grateful for. Writing it or speaking it has a bit more impact, but even silent gratitude will do.