



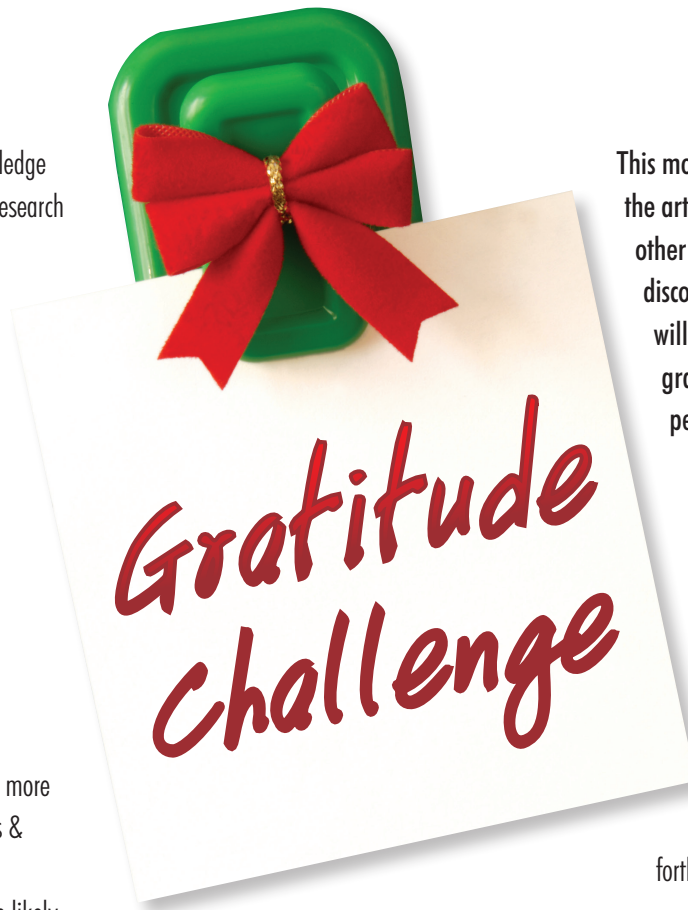
# challenge

In Good Health

December 2010

The Holiday Season is a wonderful time to acknowledge all of things that you are grateful for in your life. Research shows that the practice of gratitude is a key component of living a satisfied and fulfilled life. In a long-term research project designed to gather scientific data on the nature of gratitude, Robert A. Emmons, University of California, Davis and Michael E. McCullough, University of Miami (leading researchers in the field of positive psychology) discovered that:

- ★ In an experimental comparison, those participants who kept gratitude journals on a weekly basis and exercised more regularly reported fewer negative physical symptoms, generally felt better about their lives and were more optimistic about the upcoming week (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).
- ★ Participants who kept gratitude lists were more likely to have made progress toward achieving their personal goals in the area of academics, interpersonal relationships and improved health than those in the other experimental groups.
- ★ A daily gratitude practice by young adults resulted in higher reported levels of alertness, enthusiasm, determination, attentiveness and energy.
- ★ Grateful people report higher levels of positive emotions and lower levels of depression and stress.
- ★ People who practice gratitude are found to be more empathetic and mindful of others' perspectives. They are rated as more generous and helpful by people in their social networks (McCullough, Emmons & Tsang, 2002).
- ★ Those who practice gratitude, over time, place less importance on material goods. They are less likely to judge success in terms of possessions, less envious of others and more likely to share what they have.



This month's challenge is to practice the art of gratitude. Emmons and other leading researchers have discovered that the following steps will help you become a more grateful, and as a result, healthier person:

1. Make a vow to practice gratitude.
2. Create a gratitude journal. Each day record 3 things for which you are grateful.
3. Use visual reminders, like pictures of loved ones or scenes of nature, to bring forth a feeling of gratitude.
4. Come to your "senses". Appreciate your physical body and its many amazing functions. Be thankful for your ability to see, hear, walk, eat, etc.
5. Pay attention to your language. Positive talk enhances an attitude of gratitude while negative talk undermines the practice of gratitude and creates unhappiness.
5. Make it part of your practice to regularly let others know how much you appreciate them. This will not only boost your level of happiness, but theirs as well.
6. Write and deliver a letter of gratitude to someone who has been a positive influence in your life. Studies have shown that this one time action creates positive effects which can last for over a month.
7. Think outside the box. Brainstorm a list of all the non-obvious things you have to be thankful for.

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