

Gratitude –

“I have learned to be content with whatever I have” – Paul the Apostle (from Philippians chapter 4)

DQ#1 - Would you consider yourself to be a grateful person? Are you content with whatever you have?

DQ#2 – In your opinion, what causes discontentment?

Article (taken from allaboutpsychology.com) - Psychological research finds that people’s happiness levels are remarkably stable over the long-term. Whether you win the lottery or are paralyzed from the neck down, after about three to six months you’ll have returned to your usual level of happiness. While these findings are deeply counter-intuitive, they also raise a serious problem for those wanting to increase levels of happiness permanently. A possible answer comes from recent research in the psychology of gratitude. Yes, you read that correctly - being thankful might be the key to raising your happiness ‘set-point’. And there is some good experimental evidence to back up this theory.

In his new book ‘[thanks!](#)’, Dr. Robert A. Emmons describes research he carried out with three experimental groups over 10 weeks. Before the experiment began participants had kept daily journals to chronicle their moods, physical health and general attitudes. These were then used to provide a comparison for after the experimental intervention.

People who focused on what they were grateful for felt fully 25% happier - they were more optimistic about the future, they felt better about their lives and they even did almost 1.5 hours more exercise a week than those who focused on their hassels or problem conditions.

Emmons also expresses surprise at the findings of the study, partly because there are some reasons practicing gratitude might not be so good. For example, focusing on gratitude reminds us what we owe to others. This may in turn remind us of our dependence on others and reduce a sense of personal control. Thinking in terms of gratitude may also focus us on the debts we owe to others and, studies have shown, people don’t enjoy feeling indebted to others. However, the group practicing gratitude still noted that they were happier.

In a third study Emmons and McCullough recruited adults who had neuromuscular disorders, often as a delayed result of surviving infection by the polio virus. While not life-threatening the condition can be seriously debilitating, causing joint and muscle pain as well as muscle atrophy. People with this condition have a good reason to be dissatisfied with the hand life has dealt them.

In this study a gratitude condition was compared to a control condition in which participants wrote about their daily experience. After the 21 day study, participants in the gratitude condition were found to be more satisfied with their lives overall, more optimistic about the upcoming week and crucially, were sleeping better.

DQ#3 – Why do you think people in this study were happier if they were more thankful?

DQ#4 – Can you describe a time when you were thankful?

As we express our gratitude, we must remember that the highest appreciation is not to utter the words, but to live by them. – President John F. Kennedy

Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it. – William Arthur Ward

DQ#5 – Why is it sometimes so difficult to express our gratitude?