

KINDABIOUS

Nov.
2018



Foreword

Happy November!

The month of November is synonymous with Thanksgiving here in the US. A day where we come together with family and friends, spend time together and express our gratitude for the things in our life that contribute to a full and flourishing life. But expressing and feeling gratitude shouldn't be relegated to a once a year ritual around the dinner table. Gratitude is something that we should practice daily for many reasons because of the myriad of positive effects it has been shown to yield.

It has been tied to everything from improving sleep, fostering positive relationships, decreasing stress, and improving our health and sense of wellbeing in general. There are biological reasons for this because the region of the brain that is activated is the same that is associated with positive emotion and empathy as well as the brain systems that regulate emotion and relieve stress. There has been further evidence that gratitude can structurally change parts of the brain.

There is a natural pairing between gratitude and kindness. You will notice that the benefits are overlapping in most areas. It isn't surprising given that they originate from the same area of the brain and both require empathy. The one point of departure can be that kindness always benefits both the giver and receiver. It is possible to feel gratitude but not share with the person or source of the gratitude, but when the two are combined it is an exponentially more powerful experience for both the giver and the receiver.

Jennifer Jines

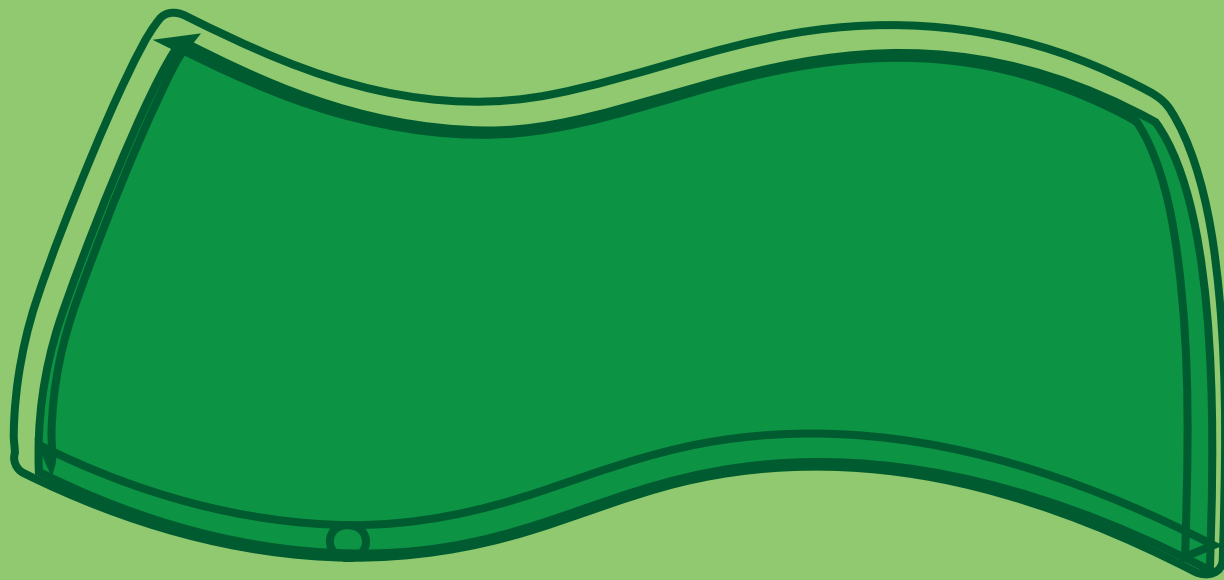
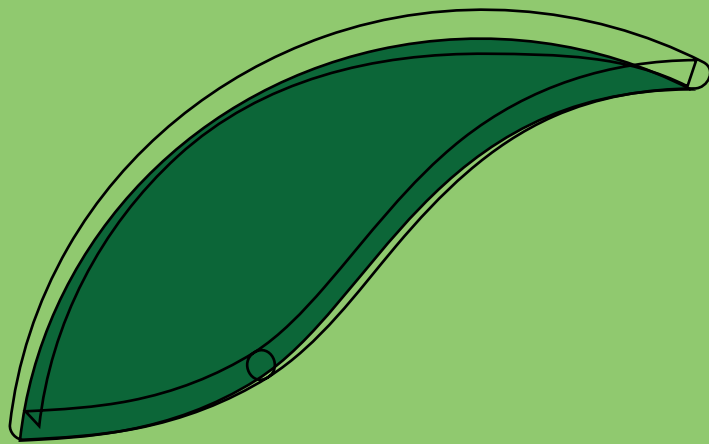
gratitude

n.

grat·i·tude

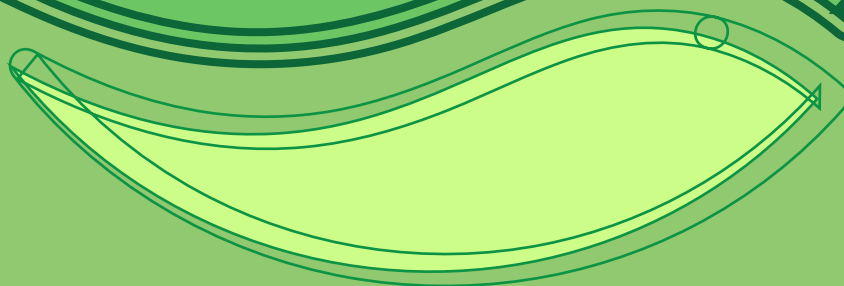
from the latin *gratus*

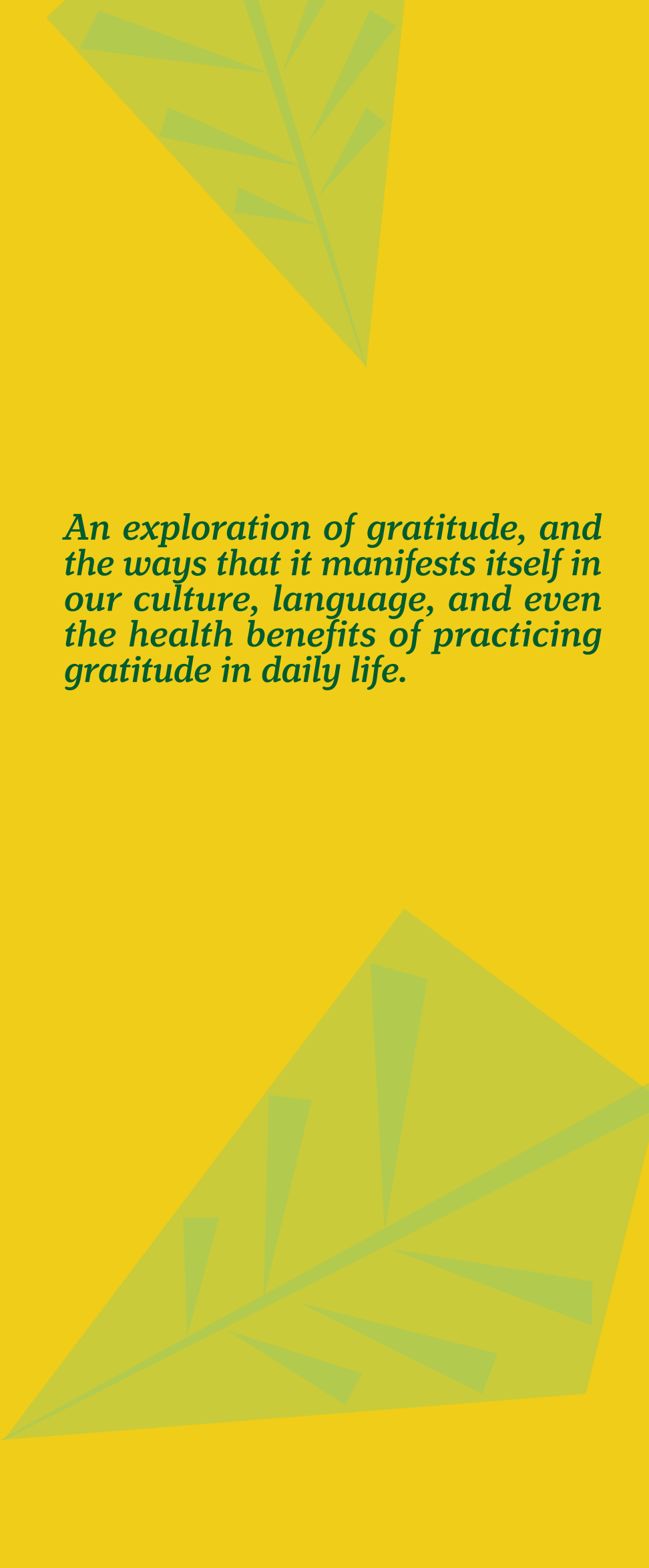
1. The quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness
2. A strong feeling of appreciation to someone or something for what the person has done to help you



"THANKFULNESS IS THE BEGINNING
OF GRATITUDE. GRATITUDE IS THE
COMPLETION OF THANKFULNESS.
THANKFULNESS MAY CONSIST
MERELY OF WORDS. GRATITUDE IS
SHOWN IN ACTS."

HENRI-FRÉDÉRIC AMIEL





An exploration of gratitude, and the ways that it manifests itself in our culture, language, and even the health benefits of practicing gratitude in daily life.

Why we should be thankful

We may not realize how much we rely on others. Every day we use roads, buildings, and many innovations that wouldn't be possible without the work of others. A lot of these things are so threaded in daily life that it is easy to take them for granted. Likewise, there are different social interactions and transactions that we have daily that we might not even notice because they are routine. You go to the grocery store to get food, but when someone lets you go in front of them at the checkout, it becomes more than a routine—it becomes a moment. There are many moments, some we would prefer to forget, and those that we would prefer to cherish. On the grand scale, getting to cut in line at the grocery isn't a big deal. But, when you piece together all these moments like

a puzzle, you see that there is a pattern; a pattern of social sacrifices, that when put together, span our planet, and all of her cultures, languages, and societies.

If someone asks you what time it is, and you have a watch on, you would probably feel obligated to look down and respond that it is 11:40. Why? Because it doesn't take much effort, but more importantly, we have evolved to trust and provide for others. Not just our friends and family, but the endless stream of newcomers to our lives. We are social by nature, and when we have to communicate and cooperate with others on a daily basis, it becomes necessary to develop a system for ensuring that we get along.

The concept of gratitude, and thanking, is so common universally, that one of the first words someone learns, whether in a first or second language, is an expression of gratitude. In English we say "thanks", in Spanish "gracias", in Russian "спасибо", or "謝謝" in Mandarin. Although these words do not have the same direct translation as "thank you", they all serve to acknowledge that someone has done something to benefit us, and extend appreciation for the action. However, the act of thanking, and knowing when it is appropriate to thank someone, differs depending on the language spoken, and what the cultural context is. For example, thanking is more prominent—more common—in English and Italian, than it is in Russian, Spanish, and many eastern languages. Especially in Spanish, where, "polite formulae, like Please and Thank you, tend to be used literally, i.e. to ask or give thanks for a personal favour, as opposed to a rendered service which is part of someone's job, like the duty of a seller to assist people and the duty of clients when paying for what they have bought." With these cultural differences, one expression of gratitude could be construed as polite in one culture, and offensive or rude in another. It is common for an English speaker to thank when asking for an item to be passed from the other end of the table, but a Mandarin speaker might feel that being thanked for such a small action creates an unnecessary level of formality, because it implies that there is a formal relationship, and not a more casual, friendly relationship. Some languages do not even have a word that translates directly as an expression of gratitude, a speaker of such a language might offer a personal compliment instead.

Gratitude, as an emotion, is closely linked to empathy and compassion. Empathy is the ability to understand, and even take on, the emotions of others; compassion is acting on empathy to help others. All three create a positive feedback loop. Expressing "true" gratitude, that is, extending beyond the simple act of saying "thanks", allows you to become more empathetic and compassionate. Increasing empathy can increase gratitude and compassion, and so on.

At the core of gratitude and thankfulness is an understanding of social reciprocity and responsibility. When someone does something to help you, or you do something to help someone else, you generally do so because you expect that the other person will repay the kindness, or they would have done the same thing for you if the situations were reversed. In some situations, you wouldn't even expect the act to be repaid because it was trivial. When you hold the door open for someone, you do not follow that person around and wait for them to repay you. Not only would you get arrested, but small acts like this are expected, as part of the collective social experience. To give and receive, and to display gratitude, creates new relationships and strengthens existing ones. Continued favors and gratitude create a deep sense of trust between people. It is possible that gratitude was formed from a need to promote prosocial behavior in individuals, and encourage kind interactions.

Given that the act of saying "thank you" depends on context, there is a deeper layer of gratitude, a psychological one, that relates to the Henri Frederic Amiel quote that appeared before this article. Gratitude is an action, it is a conscious acknowledgement of the acts that others make to benefit us. And, according to recent research and studies, practicing gratitude in daily life can provide a myriad of mental and physical health benefits, including: increased prosocial behaviors, altruistic tendencies, self-esteem, and empathy. Gratitude practice can also decrease negative traits such as feelings of loneliness, aggression, and can even lower blood pressure. One study, conducted at the University of Oregon, found that documenting what you are grateful for on a regular basis can increase your likelihood of participating in pure altruism—being altruistic just for the sake of being good. Participants were given a journal to document the people and things that they are grateful for, and they did this for three weeks. At the end of the journaling period, the participants exhibited increased levels of pure altruism, as shown by an MRI scan. This act of documenting gratitude is beneficial because it allows you to reflect on the sacrifices of others, and the benefits you receive from those sacrifices. It allows you to put yourself in someone else's shoes, ultimately strengthening relationships as well as the ability to empathize. There will be gratitude journal prompts at the end of this piece that you can print out and begin your journey into gratitude practice.

In addition to the gratitude journaling, there are various forms of meditation that are also effective in increasing feelings of gratitude; they center around the same principles as the journal. Ask yourself and meditate upon these questions: "What have I received from _____?", "What have I given to _____?", "What troubles have I caused _____?". Reflecting on these questions will allow you to figure out where your gratitude should be directed, and where you are lacking. Another form of meditation to consider is Loving Kindness Meditation, which involves directing your thoughts towards a loved one and repeating

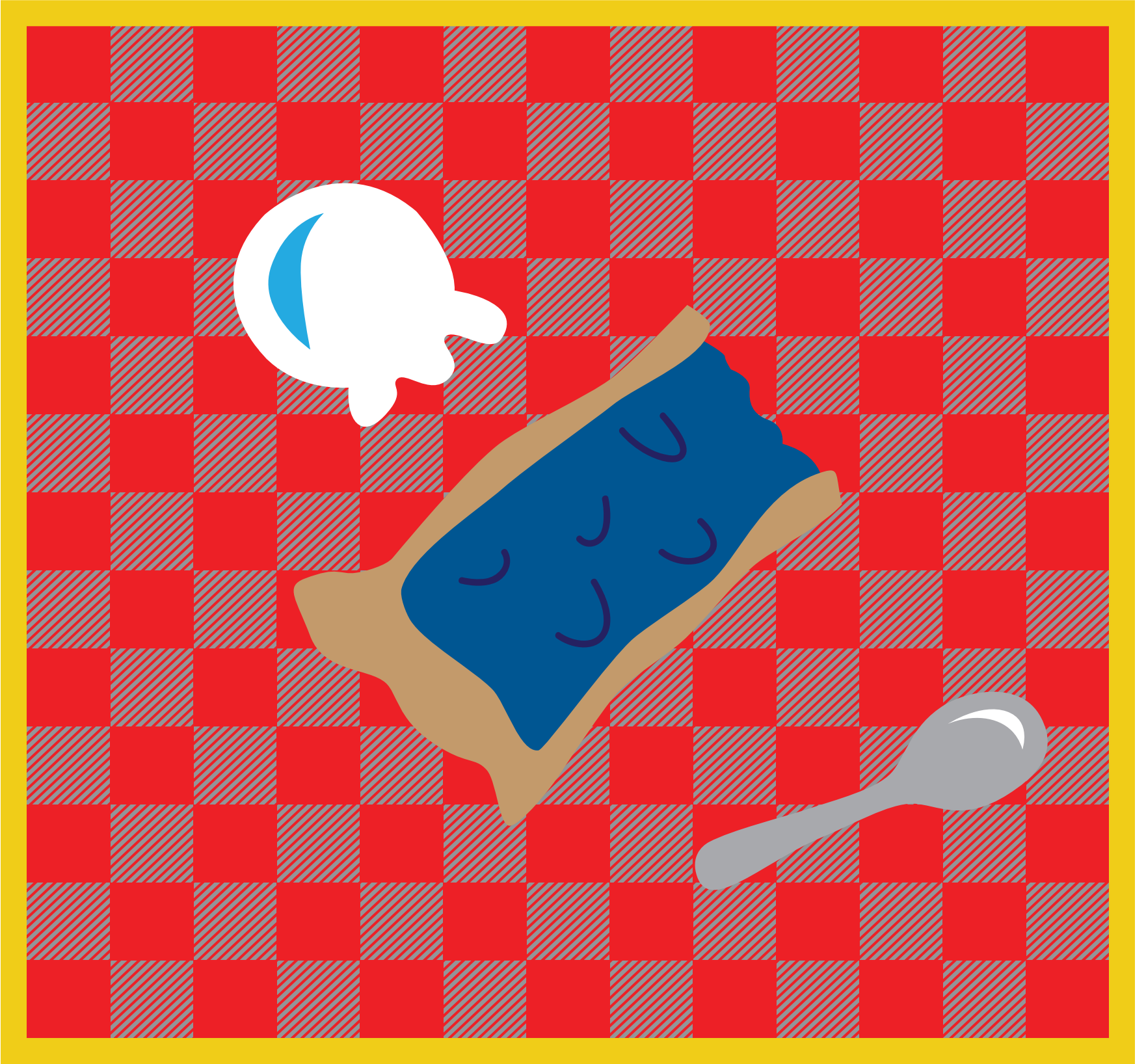
mantras, such as: "May you live with ease, may you be happy, may you be free from pain." This meditation is a compassion building exercise, and can also help foster a deeper gratitude for those around you. These practices and meditations have been shown to create neural pathways in the brain relating to pure altruism. A consistent gratitude practice can actually change the way that you think about people around you, and improve your relationship to them. A few minutes of active engagement of the brain for gratitude can later become a habitual, even instinctive response to moments of kindness.

Despite all of the potential positives that you can achieve from an increased sense of thankfulness, it is important to not let gratitude transform into indebtedness. You should repay kindness and favors whenever possible, but you should not feel that you are obligated to. You should be there for people, and let people be there for you, but you should not keep score; it's not a business, or financial transaction. If you feel indebted to someone, it can create an imbalance in the relationship, and you can feel guilty instead of grateful.

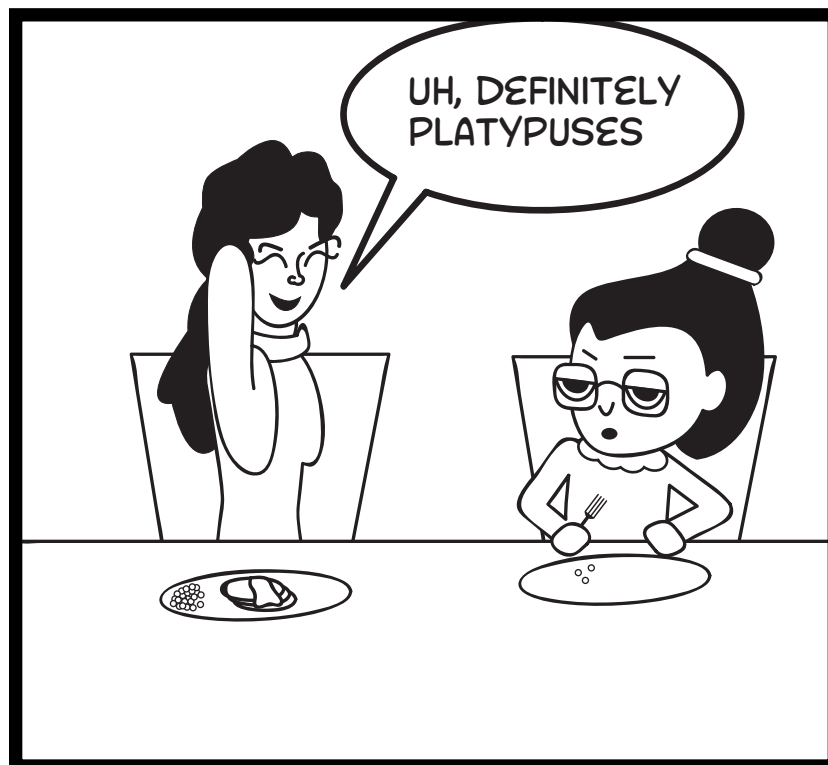
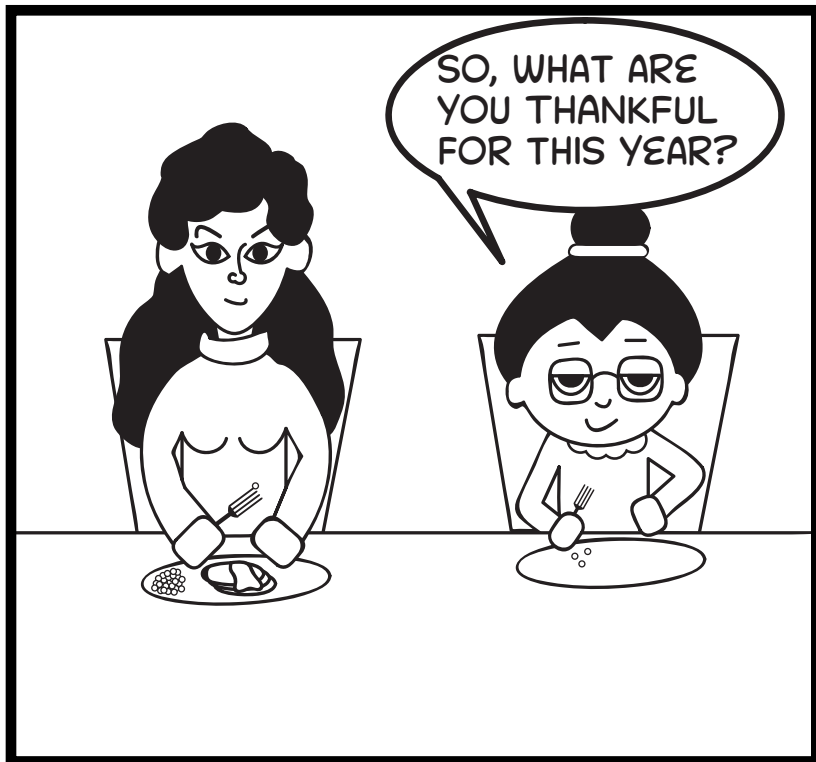
Life is full of small things. Small things that may seem insignificant at times, but then there are those small things that we just have to acknowledge and appreciate. Some strangers do or say something that we may think about years later, and remember the warm feeling that it ignited in us. We may never be able to thank that person, but we can certainly be grateful that for that singular moment we shared. And then there are those who we see every day or have known our whole lives, who may have done or said many things that we will never forget. There are many things that we can say to thank them, but more importantly, there are many things that we can do to thank them.

gratitude journal

Write about a person or thing that you are grateful for, try to use as much detail as possible. What caused you to be grateful to this person? What would you like to say to them to thank them? You can share your writing with them if possible.



"GRATITUDE PLATITUDES"





There is a singer everyone has heard,
Loud, a mid-summer and a mid-wood bird,
Who makes the solid tree trunks sound again.
He says that leaves are old and that for flowers
Mid-summer is to spring as one to ten.
He says the early petal-fall is past
When pear and cherry bloom went down in showers
On sunny days a moment overcast;
And comes that other fall we name the fall.
He says the highway dust is over all.
The bird would cease and be as other birds
But that he knows in singing not to sing.
The question that he frames in all but words
Is what to make of a diminished thing.

gratitude word search

T	V	Q	G	V	H	P	W	F	B	R	S	G	A	R
F	J	J	P	L	A	C	C	X	M	J	W	S	N	H
K	D	K	E	A	P	B	K	R	G	X	G	I	U	Z
H	Z	E	Z	U	P	E	L	O	P	H	K	N	C	O
S	V	T	Y	G	I	A	O	Y	R	P	E	T	S	H
J	R	H	Y	H	N	U	V	H	H	E	H	G	A	R
M	X	X	N	T	E	B	E	E	V	D	E	M	W	F
D	I	B	A	E	S	G	Z	L	K	D	A	L	U	E
J	D	I	T	R	S	Y	G	P	I	F	L	Z	D	T
R	K	E	U	R	G	E	P	E	N	A	T	U	H	Q
E	Q	R	R	S	X	Y	U	R	D	M	H	S	O	E
Y	G	A	E	U	P	M	T	S	N	I	Y	G	P	J
F	R	I	E	N	D	S	C	Z	E	L	Q	Z	F	K
Q	A	J	O	V	L	S	L	U	S	Y	M	G	F	P
K	R	L	U	P	C	V	E	D	S	N	K	P	I	O

PETS
LAUGHTER
KINDNESS
HELPERS
HAPPINESS

FRIENDS
FAMILY
LOVE
NATURE
HEALTH

gratitude checklist

- ♥ Today I am grateful for my family—and I will let them know
- ♥ Today I am grateful for my friends—and I will let them know
- ♥ Today I am grateful for my community—and I will reach out to somebody in it
- ♥ Today I am grateful for my health—if it is currently not good I will envision a hopeful future and celebrate what my body CAN do.
- ♥ Today I am grateful for clean water—I will remember this as I drink, cook and wash
- ♥ Today I am grateful that I have enough healthy food to eat—I will remember to eat mindfully
- ♥ Today I am grateful the things that bring me comfort—my bed, pillow, photos, music
- ♥ Today I am grateful for laughter and connection—I will strive for moments of connection with strangers
- ♥ Today I am grateful for teachers/mentors/parents—anyone who has taught me
- ♥ Today I am grateful for the hard times—because they accentuate the beauty of the good ones
- ♥ Today I am grateful for the opportunity of global connection
- ♥ Today I am grateful for the freedoms that I enjoy
- ♥ Today I am grateful that I have to opportunity to be helpful and kind to others

