

Cultivate Gratitude and You'll Cultivate Happiness, Too!

Happiness is often a fleeting emotion. And, as the Declaration of Independence suggests, it's an emotional state of which we as humans are often in pursuit. Researchers who study happiness have discovered a number of factors that seem to influence people's happiness, including genes and life events. There is now a growing body of evidence that gratitude is associated with happiness. Indeed, research has consistently demonstrated that gratitude is associated with greater happiness—people who engage in some kind of daily gratitude practice feel more positive emotions, build stronger relationships, make better progress toward attaining goals, and experience fewer physical symptoms.

Although it's easy to focus on what we feel is lacking in our lives or what isn't going well— not enough time, not having the “stuff” that seems to make others happy, unmet desires for intimacy, things we aren't doing well—this research shows that if we can shift our attention to what we have, we are likely to feel better.

Gratitude doesn't always come easily to humans, though. Just like a seed that needs nutrients, water and sunlight to grow, our sense of gratitude grows stronger the more we nurture it.

There are many ways to cultivate gratitude.

- **Keep a gratitude journal or list.** Be intentional and make note of things you're grateful for each day. Be specific about the sensations you felt when something went right.



- **Write a thank you note or letter.** This could be a thank you for something specific that someone did, or a letter thanking them for a more general positive impact on your life.
- **Share what you're grateful for with another person.** Having conversations about what we're grateful for can often help shift us away from negative thoughts.
- **Pray.** For those who are religious, praying can cultivate gratitude.
- **Meditate.** Meditation practices often involve focusing on the present moment without judgments. Sometimes people focus on a particular word or phrase (like "calm"), but others focus on something for which they feel gratitude in that moment (like the warmth of the sun or the softness of the cushion under their knees). If you're new to meditation, or looking for a meditation group to join, there are a number of opportunities for meditation practices available through Shove Chapel.



There are also a number of people here on campus who would be happy to work with you on ways to cultivate gratitude in your life: The CC Chaplains, the Counseling Center, and the Wellness Resource Center, to name a few.

Try a 30 Day Gratitude Challenge: Engage in 1 gratitude practice each day for 30 days. Then let us know how it went for you. Was it hard to do? Did it get easier the more you did it? Did it change how you feel? Send your gratitude observations to us at the Wellness Resource Center via email at: horton@coloradocollege.edu.