

# DID YOU KNOW...

## that gratitude can decrease stress levels?

"Thousands of years of literature talk about the benefits of cultivating gratefulness as a virtue," says University of California Davis psychology professor Robert Emmons. Throughout history, philosophers and religious leaders have extolled gratitude as a virtue integral to health and well-being. Now, through a recent movement called positive psychology, mental health professionals are taking a close look at how virtues such as gratitude can benefit our health. And they're reaping some promising results.

Grateful people – those who perceive gratitude as a permanent trait rather than a temporary state of mind – have an edge on the not-so-grateful when it comes to health, according to Emmons' research on gratitude. "Grateful people take better care of themselves and engage in more protective health behaviors like regular exercise, a healthy diet, regular physical examinations."

It's no secret that stress can make us sick, particularly when we can't cope with it. It's linked to several leading causes of death, including heart disease and cancer, and claims responsibility for up to 90% of all doctor visits. Gratitude, it turns out, can help us better manage stress. "Gratitude research is beginning to suggest that feelings of thankfulness have tremendous positive value in helping people cope with daily problems, especially stress," Emmons says.



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