

Benefits of Gratitude and Hope on Wellbeing

As the wellness director at Spring Lake Village, I talk daily to many of our residents. I notice the most happy among them have something in common.



No, none of them are taking a magic pill that boosts their energy levels, improves their mood, helps them sleep better, or improves their relationships with others.

Sadly, no such pill exists, but there is a way you can reap these benefits as many of our residents have — even without a visit to the doctor's office.

The secret? A daily gratitude practice has been shown to significantly increase your happiness, and your physical health as well - helping you get more sleep, boosting your immunity, and decreasing your risk of disease. As many of our residents demonstrate, people who spend more time cultivating gratitude seem to spend less time experiencing aches and pains and going to doctors.

How is gratitude linked to happiness? What are the social and emotional benefits of gratitude? Gratitude improves your outlook on life. Appreciating what you have can make you feel more optimistic and satisfied, and you will experience less frustration, envy, and regret. Gratitude tends to result in increased self-esteem and confidence, which also improves mood. There is even evidence to suggest that gratitude helps diminish the likelihood of developing post-traumatic stress disorders after an upsetting experience, like the pandemic, just to cite one example.

What impact does gratitude have on relationships? It can enhance them as we are often attracted to positive people. This positivity makes one easier to get along with and talk to about difficult or challenging matters. Being thankful for the important people in our lives is more likely to lead to reciprocated behavior, as mutual appreciation for each other often results in a more satisfying

relationship. When you are less envious and focused on those material things that you don't have, you, in turn, invest more energy in what you do have and what's right in front of you.

How does gratitude affect sleep? People who practice gratitude before bedtime by listing those things they feel grateful for report better sleep. This is likely because gratitude diminishes anxiety and stressful feelings, allowing for a more restful and relaxed entry to sleep.

Last fall, a Tree of Gratitude and Hope was placed in the Village Center Lobby and residents and staff were invited to write those items they were most grateful for on a leaf to attach to the tree. The tree was soon filled! Many wrote that they were thankful for staff, residents, family, friends, spouses, health, and our beautiful Spring Lake Village campus. Here's to a grateful life at Spring Lake Village!

— Diane Waltz is the wellness director at Spring Lake Village. She holds a master's degree in physical therapy from Stanford University.