Gratitude or appreciation for the good things that happen in life is a really important part of building happiness. There are a number of benefits that can be gained from working gratitude into your everyday life. This newsletter outlines ways to increase gratitude and has suggestions of how to become aware of things you can be grateful for.

What does gratitude mean?
- Appreciating the good things in your life
- Boosting your mood
- Increasing positive feelings
- Coping better with tough times

What is gratitude?
Everyone has times where they feel appreciative or thankful for a person or a situation. These moments of thinking about the past in a positive way give us a good feeling, and have been named ‘gratitude.’

Feeling grateful just happens sometimes, but you can also make a special effort to increase how often you feel it. Research has shown that people with high levels of gratitude experience a whole bunch of benefits, so it’s a great idea to increase your own.

Benefits of gratitude
Increasing gratitude is useful because:
- it’s an instant mood booster and feels great in the moment
- you’re likely to feel closer to friends and family
- you’re likely to enjoy your life more
- it’s good for your physical health
- it’s easier to cope with tough times
- good things in life don’t stick in our heads as easily as bad events.

This last point is really important. When bad things happen, we don’t really forget it, and people can spend a lot of energy thinking about what makes them unhappy. But, if you make an effort to increase how often you experience gratitude, it can balance out some of the negative stuff.

That doesn’t mean you ignore/forget the problems that you have or that the things wrong with your life are unimportant. It just means that good memories will also stick in your mind, so you get to enjoy them for longer.

Ways to increase gratitude.
Experiencing more gratitude is easy and doesn’t take much time. Try these ideas and see what works best for you:
- Gratitude journal. Take five minutes each day or once a week to think of three things that happened either in that day or in your life that you are glad you experienced. Then write them down somewhere.
- Take pictures. Set yourself a mission to photograph little things in your everyday life that make you smile.
- Tell someone. Whether it’s someone you look up to, or who just makes you happy, take a bit of time to tell them that you’re glad they are around or write them a letter.
- Use the alphabet as a fun and quick format for making a list of things for which you feel grateful. Share this list with your social network through email, a blog post or a Facebook page. You could influence others to do the same.
- Pick one of your five senses to focus on each day. Take note of how many gifts come to you via that single port of entry. Write about this experience.
- Write a short message of thanks for some of the ‘negative’ things in your life. Think about what these experiences taught you or made you appreciate more.

What are the sorts of things I would be thankful for?
You can be thankful for anything in your life that makes you feel positive on some level. Some bigger things could include:
- friends and family
- getting into university
- achieving a goal
- appreciating where you live and the opportunities you have

However, you don’t need to limit your gratitude to big picture ideas. Positive things that seem small and happen every day are also worth focusing on. Some small things could include:
- a hilarious joke you heard from a friend
- a new song you heard and liked
- a great day out somewhere
- a sunny day

What can I do now?
- Grab a notebook and start a gratitude journal
- Tell someone when you appreciate something they’ve done
- Think of three things that you’re grateful for once every week.

Extract from Reach Out: http://au.reachout.com/all-about-gratitude

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