

Know That Gratitude Can Change Your Life?

We hear a lot about gratitude at this time of year. So does gratitude have a part in transforming our lives?

There was a study published by the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkley. Nearly 300 college students seeking mental health counseling were randomly assigned to one of three groups.

The first group wrote a letter of gratitude to another person each week for three weeks. The second recorded their thoughts and feelings about negative experiences and the third group didn't engage with any writing activity.

The results of the study were really interesting. The first group, who had written three letters of appreciation reported that their depression and anxiety had significantly improved and remained better as far as twelve weeks after the study. The other two groups didn't see improvement.

The researchers used an MRI to see if there had been any physical changes in the brains of the first group. They found that three months after the writing activities, the gratitude group showed greater activation in the medial prefrontal cortex, the area in the brain associated with learning and decision-making.

Practicing gratitude was actually changing their lives, not just by subjective report, but physically in a way that could be documented by the MRI.

Mary Morrissey a transformational teacher on universal laws and success principles says that there are three different levels of gratitude. The first is reactive gratitude where something has to happen to stimulate the feeling of gratitude. Then you would say "I'm grateful when this or that happens." The second is objectified gratitude, which requires an object. For example, "I'm grateful for my home, or my children.

There is a third level of gratitude which can actually change your life. That is 'no matter what' gratitude. It doesn't depend on anything that is happening but is there through all the good and also all the bad things that happen. It's a decision for a way of being that puts you in a state of gratitude in life.

What You Project You Receive Back

We all know that Buddhism teaches the concept of oneness of life and its environment. So if you are projecting gratitude to the universe ,you are going to attract more experiences to be grateful for.

When we are grateful to be alive and grateful for all the good things that have come to us and also for the lessons we are learning, the more we are drawn closer to infinite mind, the Mystic Law. Gratitude puts us in harmony with the universe.

I don't think that its accidental that almost half of our prayers in our liturgy book are prayers of gratitude. As Daisaku Ikeda says, "If we cherish the spirit to repay our debt of gratitude in the depths of our hearts, then our good fortune will increase by leaps and bounds."

Daisaku Ikeda says that the best way to tap our inner power is to live life with a sense of appreciation and gratitude. Then we are never deadlocked. P. 100

You might ask, "Why should I be grateful for the bad things that happen to me?" Nichiren sets an example for us. He was grateful for his persecutions and the people who slandered him. Because of them he was able to read the Lotus Sutra with his life, making him deeply indebted to these people. WND 1, 43

He says that he believed it's most important to understand one's obligations to others and he made it his first duty to repay such debts of kindness. P.223 Hope filled Teachings

Being able to be grateful for your life and all the experiences, the marvelous opportunity we have to experience life, is living a life in appreciation.

From the Lesser to the Greater Self

Shakyamuni cited lack of gratitude why the people of the two vehicles couldn't attain enlightenment. They could not transcend their own self-centeredness and could not recognize that all people have the Buddha nature.

As Ikeda says, "Without a sense of gratitude we can neither break through our own shells or hope to accomplish our human revolution." *The Hope-filled Teachings of N.D.* p. 108

4 Debts of Gratitude

Every living being has four debts of gratitude for openers. The first is the debt to all living beings. We are all supported, nurtured and taught by many, many people. And if you go into past lives they have been our mothers and fathers.

The second debt of gratitude is to our parents. At a minimum they have given us this great treasure of life and most go on to devotedly raise us for many years.

The third is our debt to our sovereign, our country and society. So we repay our debt by doing what we can to make our communities a better place to live.

Finally we have a debt to the three treasures of Buddhism and can start to repay it by propagating the Law.

Nichiren life, as the votary of the Lotus Sutra, gave his full attention towards paying his debt of gratitude to his mother, so he opened up the way for all women to attain Buddhahood and to all human kind. That's why he established Nam-myoho-renge kyo and why we have the practice. He also worked to repay his debt of gratitude to his country by Establishing the for the Peace of the Land.

So how can we establish a **daily practice of gratitude at the level which can change our lives.**

Have A Practice of Gratitude

When we awaken in the morning we can feel gratitude for this gift of life this marvelous opportunity to be here, to experience living with all of its ups and downs.

And during the day to pay attention to the contributions that others make to our lives and acknowledge them whenever possible. When we notice all the good that is happening around us, in conjunction with oneness of life and its environment as we take our own lives to a higher level we attract more good things to be grateful for.

In summary:

We look at a study that showed that expressing and noticing things to be grateful for can actually change our brains.

We looked at the three different levels of gratitude, reactive, objectified and gratitude no matter what, gratitude as a way of being in life.

We saw that lack of gratitude can prevent us from becoming enlightened or doing our human revolution,

We saw that every person has four debts of gratitude and then discussed Nichiren as an example of a life devoted to repaying his debts of gratitude. He gave everyone the practice as a result.

Finally we looked at two ways each of us can establish a daily practice of gratitude.

URL's You might Find Interesting

How does a daily practice of Gratitude Benefit you? <https://wp.me/p3V1J9-ZC>

Do You Know Why You Should be Grateful for Adversity? <https://wp.me/p3V1J9-YS>

Know the Wonderful Cluster of Blessings Brought by Nam myo-ho-renge-kyo

<https://wp.me/p3V1J9-Ww>

Comments:

As always, I'm interested in your thoughts and topics you'd like to hear about. Keep them coming and I'll see you in two weeks.