What is Gratitude?

Gratitude means thankfulness, counting your blessings, noticing simple pleasures, and acknowledging what you receive. It means re-focusing on what you have rather than on what you don’t have. Now there is scientific evidence that gratitude produces health benefits and an overall better quality of life.

Why Practice Gratitude?

Recently, scientists have begun to chart a course of research on gratitude. They found that people who practice gratitude reap emotional, physical and interpersonal benefits. Just to name a few:

- Increases mental strength and sense of well-being
- Enhances empathy and reduces aggression
- Improves sleep
- Increases happiness and decreases depression
- Reduces loneliness and strengthens relationships

Physical benefits such as:

- Lowers risk of heart attacks. One study conducted at the University of Connecticut followed patients who had suffered from heart attack. The study found that

1 http://gratitudepower.net/science.htm
patients, who showed more appreciation of life, experienced a lower risk of having another heart attack.

- Lowers blood pressure and strengthens the immune system

**How to practice Gratitude:**

- Keep a gratitude journal and write at least one thing you’re grateful for each day. Some days you might not feel a shred of gratitude. That’s ok, try it anyway.
- Keep a gratitude jar. Write one thing you’re grateful for each day and place it in the jar. On a day of significance, empty the jar and review all your notes.
- Write a gratitude letter to someone who had an impact on you. Mail it, give it to them in person or keep it as a memento.
- Create an appreciation calendar. Each day, write 1 to 5 things you’re grateful for on the calendar.
- Focus on something you can savour or appreciate in your life right now. Notice how it makes you feel.
- Take a gratitude walk through the neighbourhood or park. As you walk, consider one or more things you are grateful for. Breathe, pause and appreciate your body and the air filling your lungs.
- Make a list of ways you’ve impressed yourself lately. Think about the challenges in your life and what it has taught you. Be thankful for the blessing in the lesson.

**Learn more about gratitude and mindfulness:**

[http://crisiscentre.bc.ca/mindfulness/]