

## ACTIVITY: Gratitude Letters

A number of studies have looked at the benefits of gratitude. Gratitude has a strong link to mental health and satisfaction with life. People who are grateful experience higher levels of positive emotions, such as joy, love, happiness, and optimism. People who practice gratitude are better able to deal with everyday stress and more resilient to trauma-induced stress.

There are many ways to practice gratitude, including keeping a gratitude journal, making a list of things you are thankful for, and thanking others. In one study, resiliency researcher and author, Dr. Martin Seligman, had participants write a 300 word letter of thanks, then follow up by delivering and/or reading the letter to the recipient. This resulted in increased happiness and less depression for the writers for a month afterwards.

### Try This!

- 1) Think of someone in your life who has helped you or supported you in some way. If possible, think of someone that you have never really thanked for their help or support.
- 2) Write a detailed thank you note to this person with the intention of delivering this card to the recipient.
- 3) You can mail the letter, if needed. However, research shows it's even more effective to deliver and read the letter in person.

**Thanking Others Is Actually Good for YOU, Research Confirms.** Erin Leyba LCSW, Ph. D. Psychology Today. Accessed 11/15/2017 at:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/joyful-parenting/201605/thanking-others-is-actually-good-you-research-confirms>

**Gratitude as a Psychotherapeutic Intervention.** Robert A. Emmons and Robin Stern. JOURNAL OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY: IN SESSION, Vol. 69(8), 846–855 (2013). Accessed 11/15/2017 at:

<http://ei.yale.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/jclp22020.pdf>