GRATITUDE: APPRECIATE THE LITTLE THINGS IN LIFE!

What does it mean to appreciate the little things in life?
Appreciating the little things in life involves focusing our attention on what is pleasurable, nurturing, and sustaining in our lives and away from those events that are annoying, frustrating, or hurtful. It means practicing gratitude for those everyday things that are easy to take for granted or miss altogether. Adopting this outlook won't stop negative events from occurring, but it may help prevent us from over-emphasising their importance in our lives.

What do we know about gratitude?
Gratitude research is a relatively new, but fascinating area of study. The practice of keeping a gratitude journal, further explored below, is one area that has been evaluated. Studies have been conducted in which participants who kept gratitude journals were compared to those who did not or those who kept a record of daily hassles. Those recording their daily blessings were found to do better in a range of measures of wellbeing including having a more optimistic view of one's life, experiencing a generally more positive mood, showing a greater propensity to help others, and even exercising more.

Gratitude promotes connectedness
Developing skills in experiencing and expressing gratitude can help us connect with others. When we take the time to appreciate an act of kindness from a loved one or even a stranger we become more fully aware of our connectedness within our community, and the positive regard others have for us. Reciprocating these kind actions further cements these social bonds, which we then have as a resource to draw on in times of need.

WHAT CAN I DO TO APPRECIATE THE LITTLE THINGS IN LIFE?
Here are three ideas you might like to try in order to develop your ability to appreciate the little things in life.

1. Keep a gratitude journal.
This is the idea behind the image in the corner of this fact sheet. Spending 10 or 15 minutes each day writing down five things you are grateful for is a great way to boost your appreciation for the little things in life, and indeed the big things as well. Think creatively – the little things could be a text message from a friend, hearing a joke that made you laugh out loud, a wonderful meal, or even the experience of spending 15 minutes doing something nurturing just for you.
Perhaps after completing this exercise for a number of weeks you might like to spend some additional time writing in your journal about how this daily discipline has changed your outlook and perspective on your life.

2. Celebrate the little things
We are generally pretty good at marking the big moments in our own and others' lives; birthdays, weddings, graduations, once-a-year family get-togethers. What would happen if we gave ourselves permission to celebrate the little things? The how and what of celebration will depend on what's important to you.

3. Slow down and savour
This idea falls into the "take time to smell the roses" tradition. Try these tips to get even more out of positive emotions when you are experiencing an uplifting event.

Try and keep a souvenir of the experience to prompt your memory later on.

Enter as fully as you can into a positive experience. Use all your senses. Notice the details.

Share the experience with others either as it happens or by reminiscing later on.

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