

### Gratitude is a powerful way to spread happiness.

Have you ever noticed how it warms your heart when someone appreciates you? Writing a gratitude letter is a powerful way to spread your happiness to others.

Here's how it works. Close your eyes and picture someone who has rekindled your inner light. Something they said or did may have changed your life for the better. This person may have done something for you years ago, and you haven't thanked them. Think about how they've enriched your life. Write them a short note or letter. Express what they mean to you. Tell them how you feel.

You can share your letter face-to-face, read it over the phone or mail it. Studies show delivering the gratitude letter in person has the greatest impact.

Commit to sharing what you wrote within the next 48 hours.

#### Some great tips

- Be specific about what the person did for you and how it affected your life. For example, "I'm grateful you brought me chicken noodle soup when I was sick on Tuesday" is stronger than "I appreciate you."
- Focus on what the person means to you as well as what they may have done. Let them know what life would be like without them.
- Gratitude letters are often a simple paragraph; some people enclose photos.

#### BENEFITS

A positive psychology study compared six tools meant to improve people's quality of life. Researchers concluded the face-to-face gratitude visit had the greatest short-term benefits. Study participants wrote and delivered a letter of appreciation to someone in their life. This simple act caused happiness scores to rise and depression scores to fall. The positive effects lasted up to one month after the gratitude visit.

Those who express gratitude in writing can see improvements in:

- Psychological well-being
- Working memory
- Sleep
- Immune system function
- Relationships
- Coping with emotional upheavals