

GRATITUDE_

ANDY ROBINSON, USMC

Marine Andy Robinson suffered a devastating injury in Iraq in 2006. 11 years later, while thumbing through the pages of a National Geographic Magazine, Andy caught an image of a bloody patient on a operating room table (see below). He quickly realized that he was the subject of the photo - just moments after he nearly lost his life in Iraq.

Andy set out to find the doctor who saved his life and express his deep gratitude for the 3,000 amazing days of life he had since that day in Iraq. After searching for months, he found the surgeon, Dr. Hernandez, who saved him so many years ago, and called him to simply say thank you. You can watch their conversation [here](#).



BEING THANKFUL FOR THE GOOD THINGS IN LIFE



"We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives."
- John F. Kennedy



Experiencing and expressing gratitude will increase your sense of wellbeing by making life feel more satisfying. When you experience gratitude, you feel positive memories. Expressing gratitude to others helps strengthen your relationship with them as well.

ACTIVITIES

WHAT WENT WELL AND WHY

This exercise is scientifically shown to decrease depression and increase overall levels of happiness.

Students: Take about 10 minutes and write down three answers to the following questions in your journal:

What went well today? Why did it go well?

Instructor: The day's successes don't have to be monumental. For instance, a student might identify that they made it to the bus stop on time, after being late the last few days; or that a parent made them a delicious breakfast. Challenge the students to do this exercise again every night for a week, writing for 5-10 minutes every night before going to bed.

Emphasize that the second question: "Why did this go well?" is equally as important as the first. The student made it to the bus on time because they prepared their lunch and picked out clothes the night before; or that their parent made a delicious breakfast because they cared about the student's nutrition. The point is that we all have agency, or control, over things in our lives and recognizing the contributing factors helps us repeat or value positive actions.



GRATITUDE LETTER & VISIT

In this exercise, students will have the opportunity to experience what it is like to express gratitude in a thoughtful and purposeful manner.

Students:

- Write a letter of gratitude to someone you value in your life and deliver it in person. The letter should be about 300 words.
- Be specific about what the person did for you and how they impacted your life.
- Inform the person about what you are doing now, and mention how often you remember what this person did for you.
- Once the letter is written, call the person and tell them you'd like to visit, but be vague about the purpose of the meeting; this is much more fun when it is a surprise.

