

Living in a State of Gratitude

Bev Janisch from [The Compassionate Mind](#) led the WTM group in an evening of reflection, meditation and mindfulness focusing on gratitude.

Bev is a certified meditation and mindfulness teacher with 30 years experience as a mastered prepared nurse. She offers mindfulness-based life coaching programs for people who want to deal effectively with stress, tune in to their lives and reconnect with themselves in order to ignite that inner sparkle!

The following is a blog post that Bev wrote about gratitude and some resources that may be helpful for you to embrace heart felt gratitude in your life:

“It is impossible to feel grateful and depressed in the same moment.”
Naomi Williams

What role does gratitude play in your life? I started with an honest look at just how grateful I was and realized that I had so much to be grateful for in my life, and didn't spend a lot of time actually “feeling” grateful.

I began to understand that gratitude can be learned and isn't something we're necessarily born with. After talking with many people, I began to understand that those people that grew up in homes that modeled gratitude and lived in a state of being grateful were more grateful people as adults.

The first thing I learned about gratitude was that I was grateful that I wasn't a lost cause and that I could cultivate gratitude in my life through practice. This was important to me because research has shown that gratitude makes us happier and healthier.

When I first began to practice gratitude on a regular basis, I found it was mostly an exercise that occurred at the level of my thinking mind. I would mentally review the things I was grateful for didn't naturally feel into the gratitude. I knew that gratitude needed to be experienced at the feeling level and not just the intellectual level but didn't know how to make the connection between the head and the heart.

I decided to do a little experiment and start my gratitude practice with a focus on the breath in the area of my heart. I was able to enliven my heart and created a very different type of gratitude practice. Thinking about gratitude and feeling grateful are different things. When we can create feelings of gratitude it turbo charges our ability to attract more things into our lives to be grateful for.

When it comes to gratitude, the idea that what we focus on expands is a powerful realization. The more we focus on what we're grateful for, the more we will attract into our lives things to be grateful for. We know this to be true, but the challenge for many of us is that we need to become mindful of our thoughts, notice what we're focusing on and then shift our perspective when we're focusing on the things we don't want as opposed to what we do want.

I also began to commit to the practice of being grateful for moments throughout the day. I would pause frequently throughout the day and have mindful moments that I call "instant gratitude". In these moments, I stopped what I was doing, paused and directed my attention away from my head and into my heart. I noticed what was going on in me and around me. I focused on the pleasant things but also the not so pleasant things. For example, one morning I was feeling anxious. You know that feeling where you have butterflies in your stomach. My stomach had lots of stuff going on and in that moment when I paused, I shifted my focus and instead of pushing the anxiety away I said "thank you" for the awareness that something in my thoughts is triggering this anxiety. I realized that I was feeling overwhelmed and the need to control things. I "leaned into" the discomfort and with the awareness I was able to shift my thinking, the anxiety dissolved and I let go of the need to control.

These moments of "instant gratitude" are about being grateful for the moment that our minds aren't focused on the past or the future. The gratitude is felt because we can experience the moment, whether it's a pleasant feeling or an unpleasant feeling. Being fully aware and present for the living our life fully is my new focus for gratitude.

I am grateful for the role that gratitude has played in my life since I've become more aware of it. I'm also grateful that gratitude is a practice

and habit that can be learned. I'm most grateful that I'm learning to be grateful for the full range of human experiences, even the difficult ones.

Resources

The Gratitude Meditation Script was adapted from the following meditation that you can listen to [HERE](#).

From Psychology Today: [7 Scientifically Proven Benefits of Gratitude](#).

From The Heart Math Team: [An Appreciate Heart is Good Medicine](#).

Blessings: Prayers and Declarations for a Heartful Life, by Julia Cameron.

Buddha's Brain by Rick Hanson PH.D., with Richard Mendius MD: 3 Steps to Internalizing the Positive, pages 68-69.

Soul Shits by Dr. Barbara De Angelis: Shifting Into Gratitude and Opening to Grace, pages 259-278.

Rumi's Poem: The Guest House

From MindBodyGreen: [14 Ways to Practice Gratitude](#).