

Benefits of Gratitude Journaling

Writing down what we're grateful for on a daily basis shifts our attention away from negativity and toward positivity. This changes the wiring in our brain, which in turn leads to changes in gene expression and cellular function throughout our body. (Eric Kandel won the Nobel Prize for this discovery in 2000.)

These changes can be significant, as indicated by a **2016 pilot study** in patients with heart failure. The patients were split into two groups. One received standard care, and the other also received standard care but also did gratitude journaling.

The results were remarkable. The patients who did gratitude journaling saw a decrease in inflammatory markers (CRP, TNF- α , IL-6) and an increase in heart rate variability, which corresponds to a decrease in the stress response.

In other words, just writing down what they were grateful for each day reduced inflammation and relieved stress in measurable ways. Pretty cool, right?

A gratitude journal isn't hard to do, but as you can see, it can lead to significant, positive changes—not only in your outlook on life but in your health and well-being.

Here are two options for getting started with a gratitude journal:

- Buy a Moleskine or other paper journal, and set an alarm on your calendar to remind you to do it each day. Remember, we have to overcome our default negativity bias, so just leaving it to your memory isn't enough.
- Use a gratitude journaling app. This is a preferred method because the app sends a reminder twice a day, and you don't have to remember to bring your journal everywhere. You can also include pictures to enhance the positive memories.
 - Two good apps are:
 - **5-Minute Journal** (iOS, Android - based on the pilot study mentioned above)
 - **Grateful: A Gratitude Journal** (iOS)