



Be Your Best from the Inside Out

Donna Daisy, Ph.D. underscores the importance of an Attitude of Gratitude.

"The trick is in what one emphasizes. We either make ourselves miserable, or we make ourselves happy. The amount of work is the same."

~ Carlos Castaneda

Looking our best on the outside is closely tied to being our best on the inside. As a part of "being the best me that I can be," it's important to consciously select the attitudes with which we choose to live our lives.

Research has repeatedly shown that the starting point for enjoying life to the fullest at any age is taking responsibility for your attitudes, your beliefs about the world, about others and about whether you believe you're capable of

dealing with life's challenges. Negative, pessimistic attitudes are a very real roadblock to happiness, while attitudes of hope, optimism and commitment go a long way toward ensuring a healthy, productive and deeply satisfying life.

People who are the happiest and most resilient have several attitudinal traits in common, including savoring life's pleasures and having a sense of gratitude that carries them through tough times.



BENEFITS OF GRATITUDE

Most of us associate gratitude with saying thank you for a gift or a favor, but I invite you to consider a broader perspective. Gratitude is a life orientation towards noticing and appreciating the positive in the world. We can make a conscious choice to carry an attitude of gratitude, thankfulness and appreciation into all aspects of our lives.

Gratitude can take many forms. It may be looking on the bright side of a setback, relishing moments with your child or grandchild, or appreciating a beautiful sunset.

Happiness expert, Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky, notes that people who are consistently grateful experience multiple benefits. In addition to being happier,

more energetic, more hopeful and more positive than those with a more negative focus, it appears that they're also less likely to be depressed, anxious, lonely, envious or neurotic.

There's a biblical quote that says, "As a man thinketh, so is he." This concept is a factor, not only in our youth, but also in how we experience our lives during our 60s, 70s and beyond. If we have negative expectations, we'll tend to put our focus on anything negative that comes our way, overlooking the things that could bring us joy.

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

If, instead, we start each morning by counting our blessings, focusing on things for which we're grateful and approaching that day as if it's going to be an excellent day, the chances of making that "as if" into reality are very good. It's these attitudes that have helped my husband and me turn three years of health challenges into a period of our lives characterized by caring, compassion, respect for each other and yes, even fun! Consciously choosing our attitudes has enabled us to get past the difficulties we experience, make adjustments, move on and start each day brand new.

As we approach Thanksgiving, perhaps the most important thing we can do is make a conscious choice to celebrate the blessings of our lives, even when those blessings don't seem very apparent to us. Being "the best me that I can be" truly begins with the attitudes we bring to each day, and a good place to start is an "attitude of gratitude."

Donna Daisy, Ph.D., has spent 25 years as a therapist, life coach and author. More recently, she has pursued research into the topic of aging consciously. Donna lives in Naples with her husband.

GIVING THANKS

Consider practicing gratitude with these suggestions:

1. Take a moment to reflect on the blessings in your life every day.
2. Keep a Gratitude Journal. Record three to five things for which you're currently grateful (no matter how mundane!).
3. Reflection. If you don't enjoy writing, choose a time each day to simply reflect on objects of gratitude, why you're grateful and how your life has been enriched.
4. Identify One Thing. Be consciously grateful each day for one thing that gets taken for granted or goes unappreciated.
5. Express Gratitude Directly. Whether in person, by telephone or by letter, an in-person expression of gratitude can be particularly uplifting and effective.
6. Establish a "Gratitude Day." This Thanksgiving, consider establishing a new Gratitude Day tradition by compiling a list of 100 things in the past year for which you're sincerely grateful.