

An Exercise of Appreciation

This exercise is to create the sensation of appreciation in the body. Gratitude and appreciation can seem interchangeable, however, there is a big difference between them.

*Gratitude is the loving, kind or embracing thoughts we have,
appreciation is the physical experience of emotion we have about
those thoughts.*

Appreciation is a vital tool in managing stress and anxiety along with many other challenges we face. However, when we are feeling “stuck” in a negative emotional experience, it can be hard to feel appreciation.

This easy method can help create the physical emotion of appreciation, which will enable your mind to move away from being “stuck” towards a more positive perspective.



When feeling overwhelmed with anxiety or negative thinking...

If possible, find a quiet place to be. Breathe deeply, in the nose and out of the nose. Slow, deep breaths. For just a moment, focus the mind (as best you can) on the slow movement of the breath.

Now, bring into your mind a memory that was joyful. This memory does not need to have anything to do with the current situation and it only needs to be a tiny moment in time; your child smiling, a hug from your spouse, a particular day in the sun, a moment when the light shone through the autumn leaves...



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Breathe deeply and bring this image into your mind as if you could touch it. Allow the corners of your mouth to smile, release the jaw muscles and allow the tongue to drop away from the roof of the mouth.

Focus the mind on this moment in time. As you feel a tiny spark of joy in your body (usually in your gut or chest) imagine this emotion is beginning to spread.

If you'd like, you can visualize this emotion as a growing color or light, as cool water or simply a warm sensation...whatever makes sense to you. Allow yourself to experience the emotion, allow yourself to focus on it and feel it spread throughout your body.

Things to Notice

Sometimes we have underlying beliefs that push away joyful emotions, such as, "I shouldn't be happy if other people are suffering", "I do not deserve happiness" or "If I am happy and not worried something will go wrong".

Simply notice, invite in these thoughts, these old beliefs. Try to embrace them rather than pushing them away. You might say in your mind something like, "oh, there you are, old belief". Continue to allow the corners of your mouth to smile, continue to breathe, continue to return to the memory and the emotion within your body for as long as you'd like.

Journal Prompts

What was the memory I brought into my mind? Did I use a visualization? What was it? Did I resist the joyful feelings in my body? Why? What old beliefs came up for me?

