



THE BENEFITS OF GRATITUDE

By Meghan Koransky

Gratitude is more than good manners or a positive outlook; it is a powerful driver of health, happiness, and resilience. As psychologist Robert Emmons of the University of California, Davis, explains, gratitude involves affirming the good in our lives and recognizing that its sources often lie beyond us. By focusing on what we have rather than what we lack, we can approach challenges with greater adaptability and optimism.

Gratitude Rewires the Brain

Gratitude triggers the release of dopamine and serotonin, neurotransmitters that support positive mood, focus, and motivation. It also reduces cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone. This shift supports healthier blood pressure, heart rate, and breathing patterns while also benefiting sleep, digestion, and immune function.

Regularly practicing gratitude strengthens neural pathways involved in emotional regulation, resilience, and stress management, improving concentration, decision-making, relationships, and overall well-being. These benefits extend into the workplace, reshaping how teams collaborate and perform.

Gratitude in the Workplace

Within firms, gratitude helps reduce stress and burnout. Making it part of workplace culture begins with leadership. Small, consistent acts of appreciation help employees feel valued and supported. Here are practical tips for enhancing gratitude at work:

Make Recognition Timely and Specific. Recognize contributions in real time rather than waiting for formal milestones, such as at the conclusion of a case. Be specific about what the employee contributed and why it matters. Because employees value recognition differently, tailoring your approach makes it more authentic and effective.

Create Space for Gratitude. Make appreciation visible and accessible so it becomes part of daily firm life. Encourage team shout-outs, employee spotlights, and gratitude boards. Connecting individual efforts to firm goals strengthens purpose and reinforces engagement by showing how each employee contributes to shared success.

Recognize Effort and Learning. Gratitude should extend beyond outcomes, reinforcing a growth mindset. Acknowledge qualities such as commitment, teamwork, initiative, and perseverance, especially during demanding periods. Encourage reflection by asking questions like, "What did we accomplish?" and "What did we learn?"

Why Gratitude Matters

As Michael J. Fox observed, "If you can find gratitude in whatever situation you're in, if you find one little thing to be grateful for, then it reverses the whole situation and creates the possibility for something fantastic to occur."

Gratitude is one of the simplest, most impactful investments we can make. While it does not eliminate challenges, it reshapes how individuals and teams respond to them—fostering resilience, strengthening relationships, and improving well-being.

Gratitude Challenge

Try this quick exercise. Consider a challenge you are facing at work and rate your stress level on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high). Now take a moment to reflect on three things you are grateful for and focus on that feeling. Once again rate your stress level.

Compare your scores. Did your stress level change?

No change: Gratitude may take practice.

1 point: A noticeable improvement.

2 points: A meaningful reduction in stress.

3+ points: A significant shift in perspective and well-being.