

Jack Ludin

Prof. Mangini

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Gratitude Over Stress

Introduction:

People can work out to get into shape, and practice hard to make an athletic team, but can they improve their own well-being? Dr. Martin Seligman, an American Psychologist, educator and author of self-help books, wanted to see if a person could improve their well being. Dr. Seligman then developed the “Three Good Things” exercise, which is a week long of journaling three good things at the end of each of your days. This is supposed to help your current well-being. I personally believe that this activity is effective because it makes you realize all of the positivity in your life and the people around you. The exercise has been wildly successful since it was created by Dr. Seligman some years ago. Since researching this topic I have found many positive reviews on this activity. Not only does this activity improve the participants overall well-being, but it also has been proven to improve a person’s way of telling life events to the self. The brain starts to recognize and see things differently which causes the participant to view their everyday life differently. According to “The Conversation.com” this process has been shown to help peoples general mental health and well-being in the workplace.

(TheConversation.Com)

The “Three Good Things” journal activity developed by Dr. Martin Seligman has shown an ability to improve a person’s well-being and perception on their life, and I experienced my own improvement of well-being.

Literature Review:

The term, “Positive Psychology” is defined as “the scientific study of what makes life most worth living.” (Positive Psych.com) Now the father of “Modern Day Psychology”, Dr. Martin Seligman, developed the “Three Good Things” activity to find out just that. What exactly makes life worth living? To go further into a description, positive psychology is essentially the scientific method of studying human thoughts, feelings, and behavior. “With a focus on strengths instead of weakness, building the good in life instead of repairing the bad, and taking the lives of average people up to great instead of focusing solely on moving those who are struggling up to normal.” (Positive Psych.com)

Along with positive psychology, “well-being”, is another mental state that is heavily studied to help people flourish and live their best lives.

“Well-being is a positive outcome that is meaningful for people and for many sectors of ` society, because it tells us that people perceive that their lives are going well. Good living conditions (e.g., housing, employment) are fundamental to well-being. Tracking these conditions is important for public policy. However, many indicators that measure living conditions fail to measure what people think and feel about their lives, such as the quality of their relationships, their positive emotions and resilience, the realization of their potential, or their overall satisfaction with life”. (CDC.Gov)

Well-being is an essential part of our society and humanity as a whole. The quote above states that there are indicators about people's well-being and their overall satisfaction with life. To me, this is a very powerful statement. This shows that Dr. Seligman's study is something that is important and truly helps people. The reason I say this is because our society would flourish if the general population's well-being were to rise.

People often mistake the emotion, "gratitude" with appreciation. They are the same in some ways, but they also have their differences. "What many people do not know is that gratitude plays an important role in several historical movements and that gratitude is now becoming an important part of psychology research, and especially positive psychology research." (Positive Psych.com)

Gratitude is also closely grouped with "thank you" but it is slightly different by definition. "an emotion that is typically evoked when one receives costly, unexpected, and intentionally rendered benefits, and is thought to play a key role in regulating the initiation and maintenance of social relationships" (Forster et al., 2017).

Gratitude, from a researchers standpoint, is not only an action, but actually considered to be a positive emotion. This is a good thing because it means that it serves a purpose. Gratitude has been shown to improve well-being. The "Three Good Things" Gratitude process has shown not only me, but many other people how and why to appreciate and be thankful for their lives.

Findings:

After completing the "Three Good Things" activity, I can say that I had a very positive experience. I say this because back in late October and into early November, when we were completing the process, I truly enjoyed writing the three things down each day. After I had

written each of my three good things each day, I kept realizing that even if I think I had a rough day, it's not all bad. The gratitude process, I believe, did have an effect on my well-being. Specifically, when I started the process, I really had low expectations. But, on that Thursday, November 1st, I went to the city of Chicago to visit my friend. On my flight there I was thinking about how this process was working. Each day, whatever I wrote down, were all positive thoughts. So even if I had a bad day, I was easily able to look back on my day and see the good things.

Another thing that I found which was interesting, is that when I think back to my "Three Good Things" I am able to remember each of them in very good detail. After doing a small amount of research, I had found out that the "Three Good Things" gratitude process actually helps you recall past events in better detail. (Berkeley.Edu) Putting pen to paper with your ideas, makes them concrete, this allows our minds to keep better records of that event.

By remembering and listing three positive things that have happened in your day, and considering what caused them, you really begin to find that shining light or goodness in your life. If you start to include this habit in your life, you will most likely become a happier person. I found great success in the fact that when I replaced my feelings of disappointment, and entitlement with gratitude, I felt more at peace with myself. This happened to be true because I felt as if I was at a much more relaxed state of mind.

When you take all of the negativity and stress out of your mind, even for just a few minutes, it really has an effect on you. Eliminating stress improves work productivity, physical and mental health, and can also help maintain a healthy relationship.

Conclusion:

In the future, I will most likely try this gratitude process again. I found this activity to be very successful. One thing that I would like to try is to do this process for a longer amount of time. I believe that if an individual had done this activity for two weeks, or maybe even a month, then a person could dramatically improve their well-being. A few of my main takeaways from this project are mainly two things. I was very impressed with how well this process worked with me, but I know that not everybody has the same results. I do believe that everyone should try this activity. I have heard multiple questions posed about how the length of the activity could possibly affect the outcome. I wonder how this process could affect someone if they were to do The “Three Good Things” Gratitude process for a year?

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