

**SPECIAL FREE ISSUE**

*Flourish*  
**YOUR GUIDE TO CONSCIOUS LIVING**



*Flourish:* **YOUR GUIDE TO CONSCIOUS LIVING** is a monthly magazine available by subscription on the Apple Newsstand and coming soon to your android device. It is filled with articles, interviews and videos to help you live a more conscious life. Enjoy this special free issue and look for us on the Newsstand.

# Flourish

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YOUR GUIDE TO CONSCIOUS LIVING

**Dr. Sara Gottfried**  
**Vitamin Y: Yoga**

**Jack Canfield**  
**Create a Daily**  
**Appreciation Ritual**

**Qi Gong For Back Pain**

**Lose Weight Permanently With Ayurveda**

**Illuminate Your Intuitive Dashboard**

## From the Publishers' Desk

Dear Reader,

Welcome to *Flourish*, an oasis for those searching for a more thoughtful, meaningful existence. Reawaken your body, mind, and spirit as well as your pets and your surroundings with our selection of articles and insights that weave the tapestry for a rich and flourishing life. Take time to inspire and immerse yourself in these enriching and practical ideas that are sure to take you to your deep inner connection and true reverence for life.

We have carefully picked authors and articles to offer you insights to cultivate a conscious lifestyle of balance, wellness, and mindfulness. Some articles will touch you at the cellular level and inspire you to learn more. Other articles will remind you that you are on the right path, and encourage your renewed vigor to seek a balanced and healthy life-style. You are sure to be enlightened, enriched and supported as you consciously create the joyful and harmonious life you have always imagined.

*Flourish* will continue to offer articles and insights on such areas as wellness, self-enrichment, feng shui, ayurveda, healing therapies for humans and animals, healthy food, and mindfulness practices such as: yoga, qigong, meditation and many other treasures of wisdom to accompany you on your life's journey.

Until our next issue of *Flourish*,  
may you flourish in all you do.

Namaste,

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We value your feedback. Feel free to offer suggestions of articles and authors you would like to hear more from, and also comments and suggestions about the issue. Your ideas inspire us.

# Contents

*Strike a Pose and Call Me in the Morning*

**Dr. Sara Gottfried M.D.**

*Is Gratitude the Path to a Better World*

**An Interview with Brother David Steindl-Rath**

*Gratitude HD: Video*

**A Short Film by Louie Schwartzberg**

*How to Illuminate Your Intuitive Dashboard*

**Nick Polizzi**

*Preparing the Body for Winter*

**Master Chunyi Lin**

*Qi Gong for Back Pain*

**Lee Holden**

*Infinite Quantum Qi Gong*

**Lee Wai Ching**

*Being Inspired by Your Home:  
A Feng Shui Experience*

**Carole Hyder MA**

*Lose Weight Permanently With Ayurveda*

**Dr. John Douillard D.C.**

*Change Your World in 20 Minutes*

**Deborah King**

*How to Create a Daily Appreciation Ritual*

**Jack Canfield**

*Gratitude Meditation: Video*

**Angela Carol Brown**

*The Psychology of Giving Thanks*

**Melanie Tannenbaum MA**

*Spice For Life*

**Joseph Rau**



## **STRIKE A POSE AND CALL ME IN THE MORNING: 5 WAYS YOGA CHANGED MY LIFE**

**by Dr. Sara Gottfried MD**

<http://thehormonecurebook.com/>

When I was in my thirties, I was working hard. I won't tell you that I was working too hard, but I was working without sufficient balance. My day job was as a doctor at a Health Maintenance Organization, which I regard as my years in McMedicine. It meant seeing dozens of patients every day, never stopping for a lunch break and squeezing extra-extra hours of paperwork into the week whenever possible. I felt like I worked on an assembly line, and rarely had the luxury of connecting with my patients the way I most wanted. I was often stressed out, angry, and resentful.

I was mother to two young girls who needed help with homework, school lunches, and field trip forms.

I was married to a man busy redefining the way the world looked at sustainable building.

I worked out constantly to relieve stress – running, spinning, boot camp, weights – but it wasn't giving my body the relief or joy that it craved.

I was 25 pounds overweight, and thought PMS stood for "Pass My Shotgun." I preferred a glass of wine to sex with my husband, didn't spend enough time with my girlfriends, was chronically low in oxytocin (the hormone of love, bonding and social affiliation), and I can tell you that many modern women (and men) feel this way.

I had never been more unhealthy in my life.

And then I found yoga. Rather, I re-discovered yoga, because it was in my genes.

Yoga had been part of my world before, but it took some serious overwhelm before I embraced it. Turns out, it was the perfect prescription to my stressed-out life.

## **Mud, Miracle, Great-Granny**



Here's a little background: Growing up, I had an eccentric great-grandmother nicknamed Mud (my grandfather couldn't say the full German name for "mother," and the nickname stuck).

Mud was a whole-foodist. She never touched alcohol ("I love wine, but it doesn't love me"), she slept on a board ("good for the posture, my dear"), and she was a dedicated yogi decades before it was fashionable. She looked decades younger than her peers and lived a vigorous, joyful life until she died peacefully in her sleep at age 97. Mud planted the seed early on in my mind that perfect health could be achieved through lifestyle and exercise, without a single pill or prescription.



Dr. Sara Gottfried M. D.

## Vitamin Y

When I started researching natural strategies for how to solve my stress, my weight gain, and my feelings of “meh,” a world of hormone imbalances (and their amazingly simple preventative strategies) opened up before me. The most effective treatment that I found is an absolute powerhouse when it comes to reducing stress, losing weight, revving metabolism and increasing longevity.

Oh yes: I’m talking about yoga.

I didn’t just adopt a regular yoga practice (that’s not how this doctor rolls) – I became a certified yoga teacher and now share yoga’s health benefits with anyone who will listen. Luckily, when the yoga talk is backed by hard scientific data, you can hold the attention of even the most cynical doctors and frazzled patients.

After decades of balancing the hormones of thousands of women and men, I can confidently tell you that chronic stress and, as a result, elevated cortisol levels, is wreaking havoc on the weight, memory, mood, and sex drive of millions. Our modern lifestyle has turned us into stress-cases who would rather go on Facebook than have sex with our partners. The worst part is that the cortisol has the power to throw the other main hormones – estrogen, testosterone, thyroid – out of whack.

Here's how yoga changed my chaotic life, beyond teaching me how to balance with one leg behind my head:



## **1. Nix The Ruinous Running**

Unlike high-impact running which increases cortisol, your main stress hormone, yoga lowers it. I've been a runner my entire life but after adding yoga to my routine, I lost weight, gained energy, and actually felt rejuvenated instead of depleted after my workouts. For stressed-out people, yoga provides a form of exercise that prevents hormones from going haywire and keeps cortisol in check.

## **2. Boost Soothing Serotonin**

Yoga has been shown to raise your serotonin, the happy brain chemical responsible for mood, sleep, and appetite. Women have 52% less serotonin than men, according to my friend, Daniel Amen, so that may be just one of the reasons we see fewer dudes on the mat — women need yoga to balance our serotonin, feel buoyant, sleep soundly, and put down the fork.



### **3. Amplify Beautiful Belly Breathing**

The focus on breath and the meditative aspect of yoga also helps change the way your *mind* interprets stress, leading to lowered cortisol levels and a calmer day-to-day. Yoga can be a serious workout, yes, but it can also be a quiet moment to yourself. Taking time, even just 15 minutes, to concentrate on what you need will help lower cortisol levels and remind your family that you are not always at their beck and call. Ahhh-ommmm.

### **4. Love Up Your Dynamic DNA**

Disease is the result of inflammation, and one of the best ways to cool inflammation is yoga. Yoga has been shown to lower IL-6, a biomarker of how inflamed you are. We know that you can change 50-80% of how your DNA is expressed with how you eat, move, think, and supplement — consider how yoga helps you create a good neighborhood, not a bad neighborhood.



## 5. Surrender to Stretching

Lastly, the twisting, bending, and micro-adjustments of yoga keep your spine and joints strong and supple. Iyengar told us that it squeezes your organs like a sponge, removing the stale blood so fresh oxygenated blood may rush in when you release your twist. Maintaining your energy, flexibility and strength keeps exercise an option long into old age. Regular exercise also prevents sugar cravings and keeps your metabolism humming, which in turn keep you other hormones on healthy and regular cycles.

Today, I use yoga to live longer, love better, laugh louder, to keep my mind clear, and to prevent the most common health concerns that I know we all face. Yoga provides me the balance of work and play, of mindfulness and escape, and of relaxation and challenge. Whether it's yoga, meditation, or just a few moments of deep breathing every morning, I prescribe to everyone a practice that will help them keep their hormones – and their tree pose – in balance.

*Dr. Sara Gottfried is a Harvard-trained MD with over 20 years of experience and is the author of the New York Times bestselling book *The Hormone Cure*. She has dedicated her life to helping women balance their hormones naturally. You may visit Dr. Gottfried at her website: [www.saragottfriedmd.com](http://www.saragottfriedmd.com) , and you may purchase her book *The Hormone Cure* at:*

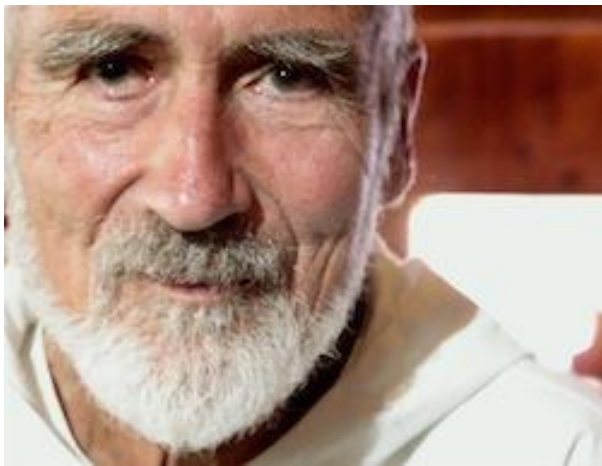
<http://thehormonecurebook.com>

# IS GRATITUDE THE PATH TO A BETTER WORLD?

By Jill Suttie

An interview with Brother David Steindl-Rast, Benedictine monk, author, and leading figure in the worldwide gratitude movement.

*Brother David Steindl-Rast is a Benedictine monk and one of the leading figures in a worldwide gratitude movement. Long before gratitude became a hot topic of scientific research, Brother David was writing about gratefulness as the heart of prayer and a path to liberation, helping to promote the practice of gratitude as a way of healing oneself and society. Perhaps best known for helping create interfaith dialogues to increase understanding between religious traditions, he received the Martin Buber Award in 1975 for his work in this area.*



**Brother David Steindl-Rast**

*Today, he's helping create a worldwide movement called the [Network for Grateful Living](#) through an interactive online forum that reaches several thousand participants daily from more than 240 countries. The author of numerous books, book chapters, and articles, Brother David has recently released a new book called [99 Blessings: An Invitation to Life](#)—a collection of prayers meant to appeal to a general readership.*

*Jill Suttie recently caught up with Brother David to discuss his views on the science of gratitude and where the movement is headed.*

**Jill Suttie:** You began promoting the practice of gratitude for religious reasons long before it became a topic of interest in Western science. What do you make of the sudden scientific interest in studying gratitude?

**Brother David Steindl-Rast:** Actually, the scientific interest did not arise quite as suddenly as it may seem. As long ago as the mid 20th century, alert psychologists like Abraham Maslow became aware of the importance of

gratitude—which he writes about in [Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences](#)—but mainstream science was stuck in taking physics for its model of inquiry and showed no interest in exploring values. In the 21st century consciousness research and cognitive neuroscience are leading towards new frontiers, encountering new questions, and are beginning to push the envelope of what used to be considered classical scientific inquiry. The change of consciousness that is sweeping the world at large has its effect also on the minds of scientists.

Modern science has the same power over people’s minds that religion had in the Middle Ages. But public interest has a more powerful influence on the direction of science than many people realize. For influencing science, an important point of leverage is the funding of research. For example, the [Templeton Foundation’s](#) funding of [Robert Emmons’ pioneering studies](#) of grateful behavior has contributed much to making the topic of gratitude acceptable in scientific circles. Scientific findings, in turn, make gratitude respectable in the eyes of the media and so to an ever-growing segment of society. This creates a feedback loop, which accounts for the current “gratitude boom.”

**JS:** Science has shown that practicing gratitude increases happiness and health in an individual. How does practicing gratitude benefit society at large?

**BDSR:** Well, the first and most obvious answer is: Anything that produces happier, healthier individuals creates thereby a society in which more people are healthy and happy. This alone is a great improvement. But we can go a step further and show that grateful individuals live in a way that leads to the kind of society human beings long for. In many parts of the world society is sick. Keywords of the diagnosis are: Exploitation, oppression, and violence. Grateful living is a remedy against all three of these symptoms.

Exploitation springs from greed and a sense of scarcity. Grateful living makes us aware that there is enough for all. Thus, it leads to a sense of sufficiency and a joyful willingness to share with others.

Oppression is necessary if we want to exploit others. It results in competition

and in the Power Pyramid: The more power you have, the more efficiently you can exploit those below you and protect yourself against those above you. But grateful people live with a sense of sufficiency; they need not exploit others. Thus, oppression becomes unnecessary; it is replaced by mutual support and by equal respect for all.

Violence springs from the root of fear—fear that there may not be enough for all, fear of others as potential competitors, fear of foreigners and strangers. But the grateful person is fearless. Thereby she cuts off the very root of violence. Out of a sense-of-enough she is willing to share and thereby tends to eliminate the unjust distribution of wealth that creates the climate for violence. Fearlessly, she welcomes the new and strange, finds itself enriched by differences, and celebrates variety.

Thus, grateful living takes away the main reasons for exploitation, oppression and violence; through sharing, universal respect, and non-violence it provides the basis for a healthy society and a world with a chance to survive.

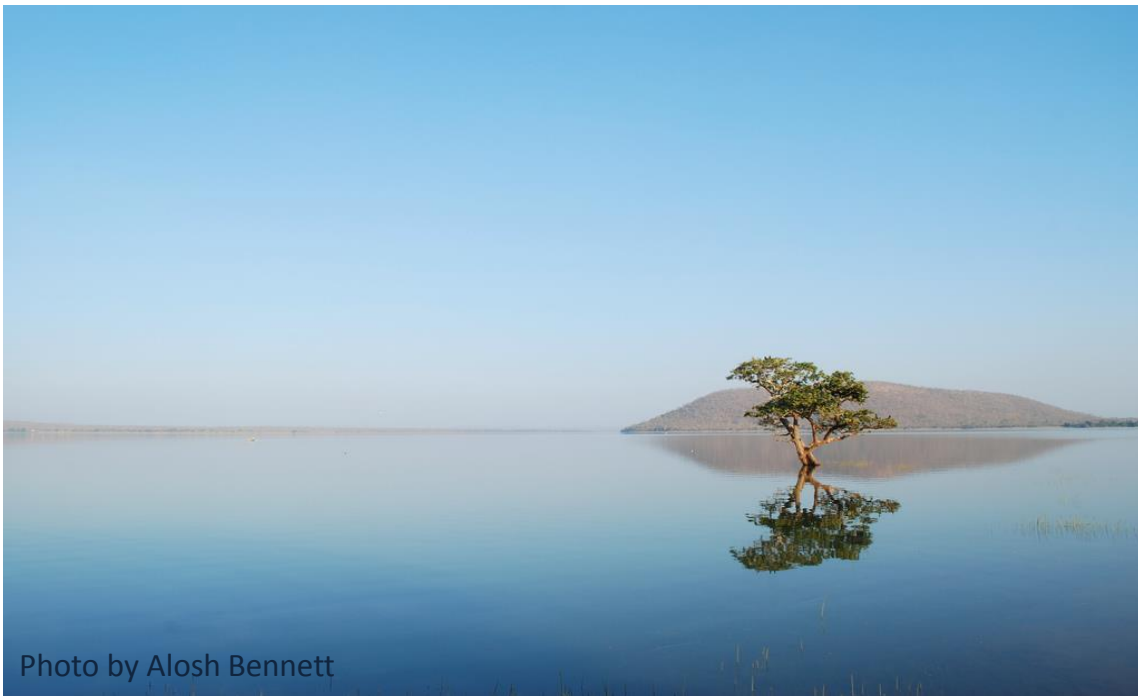


Photo by Alish Bennett

**JS:** Some people think the science of gratitude is a waste of time—in other words, it's obvious that gratitude is good for you. Do you think science contributes something important to the global gratitude movement? If so, what are its contributions?

**BDSR:** We all know that eating is not only good for us, but necessary for survival. And yet, the scientific study of nutrition can bring us great benefits. Similarly, although everyone knows that it “feels good” to be grateful, the scientific study of gratitude can broaden our knowledge, refine our distinctions, and deepen our understanding.

Just as academic interest gave nutrition a new “respectability” it can do the same for gratitude. This is important and can certainly be of help to the global gratitude movement. However, what gives a movement its impetus is not information, but enthusiasm and commitment. The spark that ignited the global gratitude movement is the enthusiasm of men and women who discovered that grateful living makes life meaningful and full of joy.

**JS:** Some people may experience difficulty practicing gratitude, maybe because they’re depressed or they’ve experienced a severe trauma. What advice would you give to someone in that state of mind?

**BDSR:** Gratitude is the spontaneous response of a healthy body and mind to life. We should not expect it from a person who suffers in mind or body. With training, however, one can learn to focus on “opportunity” as the gift within every given moment. This attitude towards life always improves the situation. Even in times of sickness, someone who habitually practices grateful living will look for the opportunity that a given moment offers and use it creatively.

**JS:** Do you ever have days where it’s hard for you to practice gratitude? If so, what gets in your way?

**BDSR:** Illness and depression make it more difficult to be alert to gratitude, for lack of energy. But even on healthy days, I need to put myself back, again and again, onto the track of grateful living. What gets in the way is familiarity; the proverb is right: “Familiarity breeds contempt.” Grateful eyes look at whatever it be as if they had never seen it before and caress it as if they would never see it again. This is a most realistic attitude, for every moment is indeed unique. But of this I need to remind myself again and again. This reminding myself is the dynamic element in mindfulness.

Grateful living is the awareness that we stand on holy ground—always—in

touch with Mystery. Jewish sages interpret the words of Genesis 3:5 in a way that is of great relevance to grateful living. “Take off your shoes; the ground on which you stand is holy ground.” The soles of your shoes are leather—dead animal skin. Take off the deadness of being-used-to-it and your live souls will Feel that you are standing on holy ground, wherever you are.

**JS:** Where do you see the gratitude movement heading from here?

**BDSR:** As someone aptly quipped, “It is difficult to make predictions—especially about the future.” It is, however, pretty evident that greed, oppression, and violence have led us to a point of self-destruction. Our survival depends on a radical change; if the gratitude movement grows strong and deep enough, it may bring about this necessary change. Grateful living brings in place of greed: sharing; in place of oppression: respect; in place of violence: peace. Who does not long for a world of sharing, mutual respect, and peace?

This article originally appeared on [Greater Good](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu), the online magazine of UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center. To view the original article, tap here: [http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/is\\_gratitude\\_the\\_path\\_to\\_better\\_world](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/is_gratitude_the_path_to_better_world)

To view their expanding gratitude project tap here: <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/expandinggratitude/rfp/>



Photo by Diana Robinson

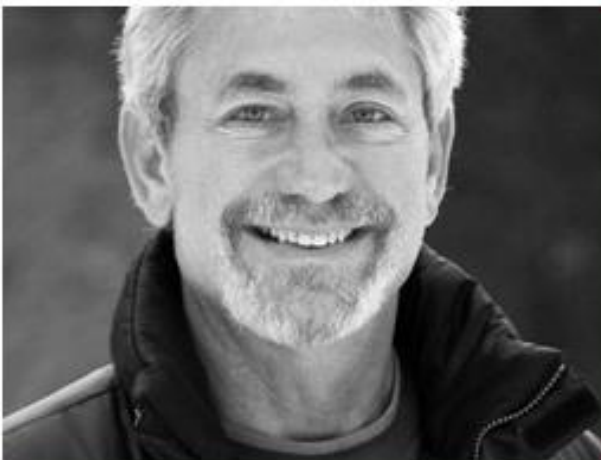


# Gratitude HD – Moving Art™

<http://youtu.be/nj2ofrX7jAk>

## A Short Film by Louie Schwartzberg

When we at Flourish first saw Louie Schwartzberg's short film "Gratitude" we were captivated from the opening sequence. We think you will be too. Check out some of his other short films at: <http://movingart.com/>



Louie Schwartzberg is an award-winning cinematographer, director and producer who captures breathtaking images that celebrate life – revealing connections, universal rhythms, patterns and beauty.

# How to Illuminate Your Intuitive Dashboard

**By Nick Polizzi**

On the healing path, a few well placed words of wisdom can sometimes trigger a much needed ~~wa~~ha+deep within that brings everything into focus.

One of the most powerful lessons that I've been taught is this:

A true healer doesn't actually heal us; he or she simply helps us remove the blocks that are inhibiting our ability to heal ourselves.

The philosophy that our individual organisms prefer to be in healthy equilibrium and can often times spontaneously cure themselves comes as a big shock to many people. It is drilled into us that our health conditions are simply unavoidable, fate-driven occurrences that can be remedied only through external interventions like surgery or prescription drugs.

The greatest casualty of this limited way of thinking is the death of our sense of responsibility for our own well-being . a very dangerous thing to lose. When we stop listening to the subtle bits of information that our bodies are sending us, the lights on our internal dashboard shut off, and we are essentially driving blind.

I've heard it said in many different ways by many different healers that you are your own best doctor. But what does that really mean?

To me, this means that I need to nourish a rich and intimate inner dialogue with myself, an ongoing conversation with that subtle voice that exists in the periphery of my awareness . which is amplified when I am in solitude.



This might sound woo woo, but once you start engaging in your own healing process (whether it is physical, mental, or emotional) and begin listening to your personal navigation system, information begins to present itself, sometimes subtly and sometimes not-so-subtly.

Over the years I've noticed a very tricky - yet beautiful - aspect of this inner healer that exists within all of us. When we are in a centered state of mind, we can turn on our intuitive dashboard rather easily - and what a thrill it is! However, this illusive interface can disappear just as quickly, especially when the daily grind of life begins to take hold.

Even the most evolved spiritual leaders regularly find themselves detached from their true essence. Presence is a sneaky thing - we absolutely know it when we are in the flow, but there is no warning signal when we fall off and get into our heads. I don't know anyone who has figured out how to live in uninterrupted peace - but many of the healers I've met use specific techniques to ground themselves and get re-acquainted with their inner voice in times of hardship and challenge.

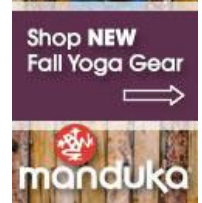
Here is one that I just used today. The concept is called Entry Points.

A very quick way to get back into relationship with your inner guide is by finding the right point of re-entry. This can be done in a number of ways but here's a great one to start with:

Throughout the day, begin examining the behavioral patterns that you are running until you notice a particular action or strategy that is not serving you. The idea is to find a tiny habit to improve upon.

This is easier said than done. We are very pattern-oriented beings and take great comfort in our routines - even the ones that are hurting us.

Let me give you a personal example.



This morning I was moving a bunch of things into our work space, which involves a few flights of stairs and some heavy metal doors. I was in such a hurry to get the rest of my day started that I opted to try taking some %acrobat~~ic~~ shortcuts.+ Instead of taking the time to prop each door open beforehand to make my life easier, I attempted to juggle the first load of boxes on my knee while fumbling to open each door. Smart, right?

As I approached the second door, something inside me said, %You always rush things like this and it never leaves you in a peaceful place.+ I almost ignored this quiet insight, but it triggered me just enough to stop what I was doing, place the boxes on the ground and begrudgingly prop open all the doors, from the curb to my office.

Now, this seems like an obvious course of action, but I literally had to force myself to do it. Again, old patterns are hard to break.

Once the doors were open and I was on my way down for the next load of boxes, I began to feel a lightness of spirit, almost as if I had crossed a major life threshold. At the bottom of the stairs, the inner voice came back and said:

%You don't help anyone when you rush through life. Take the time to attend to your path and you will be happier and more beneficial to everyone around you.+

As I began climbing the stairs with a new payload of gear, it wrapped up the lesson with:

%Now, apply this knowledge to all of your interactions today.+

Everyone is different and communicates with their intuitive self differently, but for me it is always very literal and almost audible. Once the navigation system is illuminated, it's with me throughout the day . until it isn't, then it's time to find another entry point.



So here's the technique again:

"Run a personal system scan and locate a subtle tweak that you can make right now that will change your life for the better. This can be something as simple as cleaning your garage or writing that "thank you" letter that is long overdue. The key is that it must be something that you have been resisting for whatever reason.

"Find this habit and begin to manually adjust your behavior . physical tasks are great ones to start with!

"Last but not least, keep your intuitive ears open to any internal dialogue that begins flowing while you move.

**Nick Polizzi** is the director of *The Sacred Science Project*. Please check out his groundbreaking film **The Sacred Science** at:

<http://www.thesacredscience.com>


## **The Sacred Science Official Trailer**

<http://youtu.be/RTVI8eI8eOU>

# PREPARING THE BODY FOR WINTER

By Master Chunyi Lin

[www.springforestqigong.com/](http://www.springforestqigong.com/)

A black and white photograph showing the silhouettes of several bare tree branches. One branch in the upper left has a large, dark, textured mass at its tip, possibly a seed pod or a cluster of leaves. The branches are thin and dark, creating a stark contrast against the white background.

At this time of year with winter's energy starting to come in, all of the energy of the plants, which are so visible to us in spring and summer, have gone back to the roots, back into the earth. The energy is being stored up now for the next spring to come. Just as the plants are storing and building up their energy during wintertime, we should do the same with our physical bodies.

This is the time to focus more on building your kidney energy. Your kidney energy is the source of your vitality and longevity. Protecting and strengthening your kidneys, your vitality energy, is so important this time of year. It will not only help keep you healthy and strong during winter but will also prepare your body for the more active times of spring and summer.

There are many simple things you can do for your physical body now that will help you strengthen and protect your kidney energy and vitality. The first key is to focus on your back and legs. This will help to keep your kidney energy from being depleted in winter.

To begin with be sure to keep your back and neck covered and warm whenever you go out in the cold. The bladder channel runs down the back and there are many energy points in the back connecting to the kidneys. If the back gets cold then it can hurt not only the kidneys but the energy of the lungs and liver as well.

Keeping your legs warm in winter is also important. People cover the upper part of the body in winter but don't pay as much attention to making sure the legs are warm and protected.

This is not a good thing because the legs represent vitality and when the legs get cold in the winter it can drain your vitality energy and lead to health problems when spring comes. These things are especially important for people who have or have had heart problems.



Photo by Lucie Provencher



The liver and pancreas energy channels run through the front or back of the knees. The stomach channel and bladder channel run through the knees as well. The knees and heels have many important energy points and the flow of energy can easily become stuck in either area. Obviously, that's not helpful and the simplest thing you can do to keep this from happening in wintertime is to keep your legs, ankles and feet warm. Just doing that can help to prevent colds and the loss of your vital kidney energy. Simply keeping your back and legs warm is so very beneficial.

If it's not too windy outside, try to spend five or ten minutes in the sun each day. Dress warmly, of course, protecting your back, neck and legs from the cold. Put your back to the sun. The sun's energy will come through your heavy clothing. This is a Taoist practice that is very good for longevity.

Another thing you can do in the evening is to soak your feet in very warm to hot water for 10 to 20 minutes, though not so hot you burn yourself, of course. Soaking your feet can help with good sleep and is especially helpful for people who have kidney, liver or heart problems. It can also help with memory problems.

Next, don't be sedentary. You want to keep your legs as active as you can. Standing with your knees bent while doing your Spring Forest Qigong Active Exercises is a good way to strengthen your legs. Bouncing, like we do in our classes, is very good for you. You simply stand, bend your knees a little, put your hands over your head and bounce from your knees. Your feet don't leave the ground; you just gently bounce your body from the knees up and down. This kind of gently bouncing is very good for your kidney energy.

Walking is also good for your legs and your vitality. It also helps your heart and lungs. Lots of people like to go walking in indoor shopping malls during the winter. Or you can simply walk around your house or up and down stairs in your home or at an office building if you happen to be at one. Walking is a wonderful exercise. Many doctors recommend you walk at least thirty minutes a day, five times a week.





Doing slow, gentle weight lifting can be very helpful as well but do it slowly and don't push it. Unless you are already practiced at weight lifting use light weights and always be slow and gentle with your movements.

There are several areas of your body you can and should massage to help keep your kidney energy strong this time of year. We'll talk about those in this month's Qigong & Qi-ssage tips.

Getting enough good sleep is also important for your kidney energy and vitality. Go to bed earlier if you can and get up a little later if you can. Don't go to bed when your hair is still wet as that can cause headaches and other problems. In women especially, this can easily lead to headaches and even migraine headache; having wet hair weakens the vitality in the top of the head. If you wash your hair in the morning make sure it's dry before you go out in the cold.

Your sleeping environment is very important. Limit all light sources and any noises as much as possible when you sleep. Noises and too much light can affect the quality of your sleep. As a result you can wake-up feeling exhausted and anxious instead of well rested and ready to embrace the new day.

Sleeping posture is also important. Sleeping on your stomach is not helpful. You should sleep on your back or your side. In the wintertime, sleep on your right side if you can. This is the most beneficial sleeping posture during winter.

Finally, in the morning when you wake, don't jump out of bed immediately. Stay in bed for a minute or two with your eyes open.



Maybe do a little exercising in bed. Stretching your body is good. Or try lying on your back, raising your legs and move them like you are riding a bicycle for thirty seconds or so. Then, sit up slowly and hang your feet over the side of the bed for a minute or so before you put your feet on the floor and get your day going. This is especially beneficial for anyone who has high blood pressure. It's a great way for anyone to gather their energy. It helps you start your day with your energy balanced and flowing.



## QI GONG FOR BACK PAIN

**By Lee Holden**

[www.leeholden.com/special](http://www.leeholden.com/special)

Almost everyone in their lives go through back pain. Sometimes it is a quickly passing nuisance and sometimes it's a chronic everyday hindrance. The classics say, those that conform to softness and flexibility are disciples of life and health, those who are stiff and brittle are disciples of pain and disease. Most of us have experienced back pain at one time or another. In fact, there were more than 20 million visits to the doctor for back pain each year. The goal of this Qi Gong program is to help you release chronic tension, explore new ways of moving and stretching your body, and to restore and energize your back.

If you look out into nature, things that are supple, fluid, and flowing are healthy, and things that are brittle, stagnant and constricted are unhealthy. Just like the river, when the water flows freely it is healthy and alive, when the water is blocked, it becomes stagnant and diseased. Qi Gong is designed to keep the flow open and unimpeded.

Back pain occurs for a variety of reasons: too much sitting, not enough stretching, poor posture, overweight, smoking, poor diet, lack of exercise, aging and injuries. It's no wonder that more than 80% of Americans will suffer from low back pain at one time or another.

Qi Gong for back pain fosters flexibility and suppleness as well as strength and structure. Like children, the back should have healthy range of motion and proper structure. Qi Gong exercises develop balance and resiliency, that dynamic harmony between strength and flexibility.



The goal is simple: To facilitate the flexibility in the back, to bring more circulation and blood flow, and to create strength and support. Through various postures, deep breathing, and relaxed stretching, Qi Gong increases the range of motion in the spine.

The purposes of a Qi Gong regime for back pain are two fold; one is to release and relieve back pain right now, the other is to prevent back pain in the future. Qi Gong is a great form of exercise for both clearing tension and tightness, and a phenomenal way to prevent that pain from returning.

10-20 years ago, you were put in bed if your back hurt. That's changed. Now we know that we want to move the back almost immediately.

The first thing to get rid and prevent low back pain is to set aside 10 . 20 minutes everyday to stretch, strengthen and energize the low back. The second factor is to eliminate or limit those things that cause low back pain in the first place. So, you are going to want to lift things with the knees bent, eat a healthy diet, find proper balance in your weight, if you sit, take a break to stretch for five minutes. These things are fairly intuitive, but surprisingly many of us forget or think, "I'll just do it this one time, I'm in a hurry." It's those times that we get in trouble and are hobbling around wondering, "where's my cane when I need it?" Let's not get to that point.



Some experts say that back pain is an epidemic. There were 20 million trips to the doctor in 2004 for back pain. A lot of us carry tension in the body. A lot of it is unconscious. Qi Gong is a way of waking the body up and clearing the tension.

Try a simple stretch to help relieve back tension. This one exercise will help alleviate tightness from the tip of your tailbone to the top of your neck.

“Lie on your back and hug your knees into your chest. This posture eases the back into opening and clearing stiffness. Try rocking a little bit from the right to the left. Notice how it massages the low back into the floor.

“Next, take both knees over to one side all the way to the floor and twist. Let’s start by going to the right side. Hold the knees down with the right hand and turn the upper body to the left. Again, this is a classic stretch to open the back, stretch the rib cage, and bring the breath deeper into the lungs. Deep breathing is the secret to getting more out of this stretch. See if you can bring your breath down through the ribs, and feel the expansion in your low back and abdomen. Twisting is a great way to create suppleness in your spine. After our teenage years, the only way to increase the flow of spinal fluid in the joints is to do the appropriate stretching. This is one of the best. Sometime you can literally feel the disks between the joints filling up with that nutritive spinal fluid.

**Lee Holden** is an internationally known instructor in meditation, tai chi, and Qi Gong, as well as a licensed acupuncturist, herbalist, and author (7 Minutes of Magic, Penguin 2007). His popular library of Qi Gong DVDs have made him a regular fixture on American Public Television and over 105 PBS stations throughout the U.S. and Canada. Lee's unique QiGong programs have been seen in over 50 million households. [www.leeholden.com/special](http://www.leeholden.com/special)



Photo by Patrick Emerson

## INFINITE QUANTUM QI GONG

<http://youtu.be/AHQBXBHe7AY>

**Lee Wai Ching**



**Lee Wai Ching, 54,** is an intuitive healer, certified holistic health counsellor and bodywork therapist with over 20 years of adult experience in the field of natural and holistic healing. She is descended from a lineage of healers from both the paternal and maternal sides.

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## **BEING INSPIRED BY YOUR HOME: A FENG SHUI EXPERIENCE**

**By Carole Hyder MA**  
[www.carolehyder.com](http://www.carolehyder.com)

Since my book “Conversations With Your Home” has come out I have had readers share their experiences with me. For some, just simply naming their home changed the relationship. For others, learning to listen to its subtle messages was revealing. For Beth, getting in touch with the specific archetype was the most meaningful way to connect with her home.

Beth purchased a copy of my book mainly because she was struggling with her job. She understood that her space can be a mirror of her life and wanted to see if having a conversation with her home would offer some insights. She named her home, took pictures of her home, wrote to her home, but it wasn't until she discovered its specific archetype that inspiration hit.

After taking the Archetype Questionnaire included in the book, she realized she was living in an Innovator home. This is a home that enjoys creativity, supports individuality, and doesn't settle for second best. Beth found this interesting because lately she was feeling exactly the opposite in her own life, specifically regarding her job. She followed the advice in the book about how to connect with her Innovator home and decided to write her home a poem.

Years ago, Beth had several of her poems published in a literary journal, so she felt this was a creative, unique, and appropriate way to connect to the Innovator.

While she was putting her poem together, she realized how much she enjoyed this kind of creative writing as opposed to her work as an accountant. She pondered whether there was a career for her in this field and what kind of job that might be. Beth figured that in order to follow her dreams, she would have to quit her job and its security, launch out on her own and attempt to pick up writing assignments as she could. She dismissed the idea. Or tried to.



For the next several weeks, Beth decided to find out whether there were any possibilities for using her inspirations as a writer. In spare moments, she did research on the internet, made some phone calls, and wrote some letters. She stumbled upon a greeting card company who was looking for someone to write copy a few hours a week for a new line of cards. She could work from home yet keep her current job with its benefits since her hours would be flexible. Within three months, Beth was producing inspired and heart-felt copy for her new employer. This outlet not only enabled her to cope with an otherwise boring job but also inspired her to implement some creative ideas in that arena as well.

Being surrounded by a home that supported Beth's innovative and inspired side emphasized her need to express that in some way. It provided the platform from which to integrate innovation in her own life. Had she lived in a different archetype home, she may still be grappling with career boredom. But she lived with an Innovator who wouldn't stand for anything less than creative expression. Perhaps it's time for you to determine what archetype your own home is holding. It's very possible it holds the answers to your own dilemma.

***Carole Hyder*** is an international Feng Shui expert. She is the author of three books on Feng Shui: *Wind and Water-Your Personal Feng Shui Journey*, *Living Feng Shui-Personal Stories*, and her latest book, *Conversations With Your Home-Guidance and Inspiration Beyond Feng Shui* which can be purchased at:

<http://www.carolehyder.com/productsprograms#book3>





Photo by Adams Homestay

## **LOSE WEIGHT PERMANENTLY WITH AYURVEDA**

**By Dr. John Douillard DC**

While Americans have experienced an unprecedented rise in weight gain and cardiovascular disease in the past 20 years, Europeans seem to be immune from this epidemic.

In France people eat an extremely high fat diet; in Germany and England, meat is eaten at every meal; in Italy they enjoy a high-carb diet rich in wine, bread and pasta. All four countries have low rates of heart disease and obesity.

In America we have condemned all these foods as unhealthy when we eat them in excess — yet in Europe they seem to eat them with impunity.

It seems the biggest risk factor for weight gain and heart disease is ... being an American. So let's take a look at what we do differently as Americans that may be contributing to our out of control weight gain and heart disease.

In Ayurveda— India's traditional system of medicine based on living a balanced life in harmony with the changing cycles of nature — there are three factors that rule how healthful your diet is: What, when and how you eat.

Clearly, for the past 30 years we have put most of our attention on *what* to eat with very little attention on *when* and *how* to eat. We have been counting calories, reducing fats, increasing proteins, eating more, cutting out carbohydrates and basically experimenting with every possible weight loss plan and dietary variation ... with little or no success.

In 1992 the National Institute of Health reported that 99 percent of all people who go on a diet gain all the weight back in three to five years. In addition, most diets leave us craving what the previous diet told us we shouldn't eat if we want to lose weight.

For example, 30 years ago Dr. Atkins first introduced his high protein diet to help people feel good and lose weight. It was called the "hamburger and cottage cheese diet." This diet was basically a "no carb" diet; the body was forced to burn fat because there was no available energy from carbs.

Soon, just like the mice during a recent MIT study, everyone began to crave carbs. When the MIT mice were reintroduced to carbs in their diet, they gained all their weight back and then some.

What is most interesting is what happened next. While America was craving carbs after being on a high protein diet, the next-best-selling diet offered relief from these cravings. Pritiken came along and announced his 80 percent carbohydrate diet, which claimed to make people feel good and lose weight — the same claims as the high protein diet. It was an instant success. Americans were craving carbs and it was too good to be true that you could lose weight eating the exact foods you were craving.

Most diets since have offered little more than symptomatic relief for what the previous diets have left us craving. What is interesting when we compare our eating habits with the Europeans' is that we find that the European diet is similar to the Ayurveda approach to eating -- it's a more have a balanced perspective on the how, when and what to eat.

## What to Eat

In Ayurveda it is suggested that our best medicine is foods harvested in season. Squirrels eat a naturally high protein, high fat diet in the winter, emphasizing nuts and grains. Nature provides us humans a similar antidote to the cold of winter— soups, stews, meats, grains and fats. It is the high protein, high fat time of year.



Photo by Stan Dalone

In the spring, the rules change. It is a rainy, muddy season we sometimes call allergy season. Nature again provides the antidote

with low fat, mucous reducing foods such as leafy greens, sprouts, berries, root veggies and grapefruits. All these foods are fat-burning and detox foods, making them the perfect spring foods.

In the summer, the rules change again. During the hot summer months, nature harvests cool fruits and veggies to help keep us from getting overheated and dried out.

Simply put, try not to think of what *not* to eat; think of what to eat more of. There are no bad foods — just foods that are better for you when they are in season.

In Europe, people buy foods in season at markets connected to the local farmers. In my book "The 3-Season Diet," you'll find grocery lists for Winter, Spring and Summer. Simply circle the foods on those lists that you like and eat more of them when they are in season.

## **When to Eat**

While we have been told that we should eat six meals day to feel good and lose weight, we should stop! Ask yourself with each and every new “best-selling” diet, “Is this diet offering symptomatic relief from some previous diet or out-of-balance way of life?”

In this case, yes it is. We have become a fast-food and comfort-food culture that rarely stops and eats *meals*. We always seem to be on the run. When we miss meals, the blood sugar dips; and shortly thereafter we begin to think about comfort foods or what I call "injectables" such as dark chocolate or coffee. Our blood sugar has become unstable, and thus we complain of low energy, mood swings and focus problems.

The medicinal diet for hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) is to eat six meals a day. This is a medicine — not a way of life! To really fix the problem of unstable blood sugar, we have to slowly get our blood sugar back into balance by eating *meals*, not snacks throughout the day. In Europe, people eat three meals a day and few snacks if any.

To begin the weight loss process, try eating three substantial meals a day without between-meal snacks. This will begin to nudge your blood sugar's ability to make energy last from one meal to the next. In between meals, your body burns fat, which is your stable, non-emergency fuel. If you snack then, there is no need for your body to burn its stored fat. If you are stressed, your body sends the signal to store fat and crave sugar — our cultural epidemic.

Europeans also eat 60 percent of a day's food before 2:00 p.m. Between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., the digestive process is strongest. So do your best to have a more substantial meal in the middle of the day, and your afternoon cravings should disappear in about two weeks.

Supper comes from the word “supplemental” or “soup.” As your blood sugar becomes more stable, notice how your hunger level in the evening will become less voracious. Slowly, as it becomes easier, begin to eat an earlier and lighter supper. It is through this process that you will begin to give your body permission to start burning fat instead of sugar and carbs.

## **How to Eat**

Sitting down and eating a meal is becoming more and more rare in America. In Europe, people sit for every meal. They relax, dine and enjoy well-prepared food in a relaxed social setting. We Americans

eat in our cars on the way to soccer practice, in front of the TV, or while on the phone, reading a book or flipping through a magazine.

This disconnect between mind and body while eating is more harmful than we realize. When you are relaxed, the digestive process is more effective. The mind and body are nourished, and you can experience the taste of the food and assimilate the mental, physical and spiritual benefits of a balanced meal.

When terminally ill cancer patients were asked about the most important benefit of coming to my Ayurvedic retreat center, the most common response was that they learned to sit down, relax and enjoy a balanced meal. Food had been like fuel from a gas station: They'd fill up and go.

Don't be fooled. Every culture in the world except America considers the experience of eating their food a sacred event. In fact, how you eat your food may be the most important piece of the how-when-and-what-to-eat weight loss puzzle.

*[LifeSpa.com](http://LifeSpa.com) publishes a free health video-newsletter and blog 3x/week based on the latest research on Ayurveda and natural health. Dr. John Douillard DC has archived more than 200 free educational videos and articles along with a robust self-help website and online store for the highest quality organic herbs, cleanses, supplements, skin care and books. The LifeSpa Center in Boulder, CO hosts an herbal shop, Ayurvedic consultations, chiropractic, acupuncture, and Panchakarma center & DaySpa. To receive his free educational newsletters in your inbox go to <http://LifeSpa.com/>*

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a white dove in flight against a sky with soft, golden light and wispy clouds. The dove is the central focus, with its wings spread wide. Two other smaller doves are visible in the upper right quadrant of the image.

*Flourish*

*CHANGE YOUR WORLD IN*  
*20 MINUTES*

**By Deborah King**

**Would you like to reduce stress, improve your spiritual, emotional, and physical health, and be thinner, smarter, and happier? What if you could add “saving the world” to that list? In just twenty minutes, twice a day, meditation will deliver all of these blessings to your door!**

Photo by Cornelia Kopp

I've been meditating every single day for over 30 years, and I credit meditation for most of the good things in my life . it even played an important role in my remission from cancer! When I meditate, I connect to the unlimited and unconditional state of being where knowledge, truth, and perfect health reside. When I'm done I'm refreshed, energized and balanced. I've turned the clock back physically. I've even spread a ripple of higher consciousness to the rest of the world!



Photo by Moyan\_Brenn

How can meditation be so powerful? To the uninitiated, meditation may seem like a way to %check out+ and detach from every day noise and distractions. In our crazy busy lives, that's an appealing thought . but in my journey as an energy healer and spiritual teacher, I have discovered that the real benefits of meditation come when you tune in, not when you check out!

In order to truly tap into the power of meditation, you need to be trained by a live instructor, not a book. My meditation, a cornerstone of my energy healing courses, is based upon ancient Vedic techniques, and involves the use of a personal mantra, which I choose for each individual.

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Mantras are seed sounds that were developed by sages and shamans thousands of years ago. These sacred sounds allow you to slip into the spaces between your thoughts, and travel to the unified field . the great beyond from which we all originated, where we are all connected, and where our potential is unlimited!

If you're ready to get serious about meditation, here are some preliminary things to keep in mind:

1) Commit to meditating once or twice a day, for twenty minutes. It's best to meditate first thing in the morning (before you check your email, have your coffee, or even leave your bedroom) and, if possible, again in the evening right after work and before dinner. Don't meditate too late in the evening or it will energize you and disrupt your sleep.

2) Sit comfortably in a supported position. Your back should be upright and relaxed. You might want to keep a blanket over your lower legs.

4) Nix the background music which will keep you from dropping in.

5) Don't set an alarm, because that will jar you too suddenly out of your meditation . have a clock or watch nearby, and peek at it once in a while. After only a couple of weeks, your body will automatically learn when it's time to emerge from your meditative state.

6) Plan ahead to avoid distractions . put a do-not-disturb sign on the door, and turn off your phone, fax and computer.

7) Don't meditate with a dog or cat in the room! Besides being a distraction, pets will soak up every drop of your meditative energy.

8) Don't stress if you have inner chatter+. remember, meditation allows you to slip into the space in between your thoughts. When thoughts arise, just let them flow through without judging them or focusing on them . and return your attention to the mantra I've given you. Each repetition of the mantra will take you deeper and deeper into the gap between your thoughts . and with practice you will stay longer and longer!



9) In addition to thoughts, you may experience body sensations, tingling, shaking, or other involuntary movements . don't be disturbed by them, keep your focus on your mantra.

10) When it's time to stop meditating, stop repeating your mantra, and continue to sit quietly with your eyes shut for a couple of minutes. Coming out of your meditation too quickly can be jarring, and can even give you a headache.

After a few weeks, your meditation practice will become a habit, and 20 minutes will fly by. It will become something you look forward to each day. Your life may still be crazy busy, but you'll feel balanced, present and in-control. You'll sleep better, lose weight more easily, feel less anxiety and more joy, and even be smarter! Plus, you'll be sending a peaceful energy out into the world, doing your part to help humanity.

This powerful form of meditation can only be learned from a teacher, not a book. Check out [my instructional video](#) to learn more about how to do just that without leaving home.

[www.deborahkingcenter.com](http://www.deborahkingcenter.com)



Photo by G4Glenn

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## How to Create a Daily Appreciation Ritual

**By Jack Canfield**

The period between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day is the time when most people tend to express their appreciation and gratitude. But wouldn't it be nice to experience that level of joy, love and appreciation every day of the year?

Appreciation is one of the highest emotional states you can be in. It is the state of abundance. The Law of Attraction states that like attracts like. If you are grateful for what you have already received, you will attract more for which you can be grateful.

Many people find that it requires great diligence to cultivate an attitude of appreciation. We are culturally conditioned to focus on what we don't have, rather than appreciating what we've already received.

**"There is more hunger for  
love and appreciation in  
this world than for bread."**

*Mother Teresa, Winner of the  
Nobel Peace Prize*

Mom In Reflection



Photo by Michael Daddino

## Appreciate the Smallest Blessings

Activate your gratitude by acknowledging the gifts most people take for granted.

If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes in your closet and a roof over your head, you are better off than 75 percent of the world's population.

If you eat three meals a day, you are far better off than the 1 billion people on the planet who eat once a day at most. Celebrate these simple blessings.

Do you have a phone? Be grateful – millions don't. How about a car that allows you to travel to work or to explore the country? Is your family healthy?

Do you have a computer and Internet access to stay in touch with the world, get access to education, and perform work for which you are paid? Do you have clean water to drink?

These daily conveniences are gifts that most people in the world do not enjoy.

## Daily Appreciation Habits

Here are five easy ways to make appreciation part of your daily routine:

**1. Take 7 minutes each morning to write down all you appreciate in life.** Starting your day this way primes you to be receptive and grateful for everything your day will bring.

**2. Appreciate at least 3 people every day.** Most people enjoy receiving verbal appreciation. But written notes are also nice because they can be saved and re-read. (For ideas on expressing appreciation, grab your copy of [The Success Principles](#) and review Principle 53: Practice Uncommon Appreciation.)

**3. Play the Appreciation Game.** As the saying goes, "Every cloud has a silver lining." Look for the good in all situations. When my wife was in a car accident a few years ago, she could have chosen to berate herself or question her

judgment. Instead, she focused on her gratitude for suffering only minor injuries and for the help she received from other drivers.

**4. Carry a physical token of gratitude in your pocket, such as a stone, crystal or some other small item.** As you reach into your pocket throughout the day and feel the token, use it as a reminder to stop, breathe and take a moment to fully experience the emotion of gratitude.

**5. Appreciate yourself.** We all need acknowledgement, but the most important acknowledgement is what we give ourselves. In addition to celebrating your big successes, acknowledge your small daily successes too.

One of the most powerful ways to acknowledge and appreciate yourself is by doing the Mirror Exercise. This powerful exercise requires you to appreciate yourself for the day's accomplishments while talking to yourself in a mirror. For detailed instructions and guidance for the Mirror Exercise, see page 199-201 of [The Success Principles](#).

It may not feel natural at first to focus on appreciating what you already have. But by faithfully practicing the Daily Appreciation Habits outlined in this article, you'll begin to change your conditioning.

Giving thanks should be more than an occasional exercise once year. Let it become a daily discipline that allows you to attract more of what you want from life. I invite you to experiment with this discipline over the next 30 days and watch your blessings multiply!

***Jack Canfield, America's #1 Success Coach, is founder of the billion-dollar book brand Chicken Soup for the Soul® and a leading authority on Peak Performance and Life Success. If you're ready to jump-start your life, make more money, and have more fun and joy in all that you do, get FREE success tips from Jack Canfield now at: [www.FreeSuccessStrategies.com](http://www.FreeSuccessStrategies.com)***

# GRATITUDE MEDITATION

<http://youtu.be/0R52DePavMo>

**Angela Carole Brown**



**Angela Carole Brown** is an artist working in a variety of media: writing, music art and design, the healing arts. Take a look at her wonderful web site at:

[www.angelacarolebrown.com](http://www.angelacarolebrown.com)

For more meditations narrated by her moving voice:

[www.angelacarolebrown.com/GLOBALYOGA.htm](http://www.angelacarolebrown.com/GLOBALYOGA.htm)

# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF GIVING THANKS

By Melanie Tannenbaum M.A.

As everyone sits down tonight to feast on turkey, they will be going around the table giving thanks for everyday sources of gratitude, like friendships, relationships, and good health. According to psychological research, there are plenty of reasons why Thanksgiving itself can help maintain and improve those very things for which people are thankful.

## Make Every Day Thanksgiving

Most people with a significant other give thanks for their spouses, boyfriends, or girlfriends at the Thanksgiving dinner table. However, anyone who's partnered up should try to extend that gratitude throughout the rest of the year. Gratitude can act like a "booster shot" of sorts for romantic relationships; couples that reported feeling gratitude towards their partners for everyday acts of kindness (like picking up your favorite coffee from Starbucks or doing the dishes without being asked) experienced higher levels of relationship quality and satisfaction the next day. Expressing thanks and gratitude for the things your partner does is not only good for your partner's happiness — it increases your level of happiness and satisfaction with your relationship as well. It's also not the case that people who express more gratitude simply have nicer romantic partners, and that's the reason for the higher levels of satisfaction. The response is specifically related to *gratitude*; relationship partners who felt "indebted" to their partners for these everyday acts of kindness did not show the same spike in relationship satisfaction.

This effect is not limited to romantic relationships. Another study looked at the same phenomenon in sorority women who were meeting each other for the first time; new members who reported feeling more gratitude towards the older sorority women who gave them gifts ended up experiencing higher relationship quality and satisfaction with that partner later on. So, whether it's your sorority sister, girlfriend, husband, or best friend, there's evidence to suggest one simple thing to make your life a little happier: If you feel and express gratitude for the things that





others do, your relationships with those people will be better as a result.

## It's Good To Give Gratitude...

Expressing gratitude can do a lot more good than simply making your husband or wife happy; it can make you a better person, too.

First of all, grateful adults report higher levels of well-being, regardless of age, gender, or marital status. This effect even holds after you control for other relevant personality traits, like neuroticism (or moodiness), extraversion, openness, agreeableness, or how forgiving a person tends to be. Over and above all of these variables, there is still a significant, positive relationship between gratitude and subjective well-being.



Secondly, experiencing gratitude can have a dampening effect on some morally questionable behaviors. In one study, some participants were prompted to vividly recall and write about a time when they felt grateful, while others recalled a neutral memory. They were then told that there were two tasks to be completed (one pleasant and one unpleasant), and they had to complete one themselves and assign the second to another participant. Half of the participants who were induced to feel *gratitude* assigned the desirable

task to their partners...while over 80% of the participants in the control condition gave them the undesirable task! Furthermore, there is something in particular about gratitude that evokes this cooperative response; participants were induced to feel proud felt just as happy as those who felt gratitude, but acted no better than the control participants. It's not simply that people act more altruistically when they are happier, or when they feel better about themselves. There is something very special about gratitude.

## **...And Good To Receive It!**

Expressing gratitude is not only helpful for the person who experiences it. In fact, receiving gratitude from others can be especially beneficial for the helpers themselves. When people who provided others with help were then thanked for their efforts, they were more likely not only to help that same person in the future, but also to help others as well.



Photo by Philip Dean

What's the logic behind this effect? We all have two great needs in life — we want to feel like capable, competent people (*agency*), and we want to feel like we are connected to and needed by others (*communion*). When someone is thanked for his/her helpful behavior, this actually fulfills both of those core human needs. It fulfills the need for *agency* because it reinforces the idea that

the helper is capable of providing needed help, and it fulfills the need for *communion* because it reinforces the idea that the helped is valued and appreciated by others. In fact, when people have been thanked for their behavior (e.g. others have expressed gratitude towards them), they show spikes in how competent/capable they feel and also how socially valued they feel (though only this latter sense of perceived social worth is causally implicated in the increase in future helping behavior). So if someone helps you, make sure you express your gratitude – this will make your helper feel capable and valued, and this sense of social “worthiness” will increase the odds that he/she will go on to help more people and spread the joy.

In the end, if you’re grateful for your friends and family, let them know about it all year round! It will help your relationships, your well-being, and the world around you.



**Melanie Tannenbaum** is a doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests include persuasion and the effects of power, status, and social class on attitudes and behaviors. Her personal web site is:

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[blogs.scientificamerican.com/psysociety/](http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/psysociety/)



Photo by Clyde Robinson

## **SPICE FOR LIFE**

**By Joseph Rau**

Many of us believe that eating healthy whole foods and drinking organic beverages is our ticket to a long and healthy life free from disease and those chronic conditions that plague so many of us especially here in the U.S. But many experts, doctors, nutritionists and researchers in the field of nutrition science believe that not only a diet that includes fruits, vegetables, legumes, lean protein, whole grains and healthy fats, but also a diet rich in a variety of herbs and spices can help boost the quality of your diet. Herbs and spices not only provide flavor with very few calories, they also contain disease fighting anti-oxidants and anti-inflammatory properties that have been shown to underlie many of the chronic conditions that lead to full blown disease.

For the past few years it has been almost impossible to pick up a health food magazine or visit a website dedicated to healthy living without seeing an article on blueberries or some other food and the remarkable properties that certain of their compounds contain. Modern science is starting to unravel how some of these therapeutic compounds work on a molecular and biochemical level. Twenty years ago when many of us were purchasing our first computer there were maybe 50 scientific papers available on the spice turmeric. Today if you google turmeric there are thousands.

Spices have been used in cooking in many parts of the world for thousands of years. Their medicinal properties, both external and internal, have been recognized by practitioners of Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine for almost as long. Turmeric, revered in India as “holy powder,” is used in almost every dish that sits on the table in an Indian household. It is the spice that gives many curries their yellowish-orange color. It has been used internally to treat stomach and liver ailments, and externally for its antibacterial properties. Both ginger and coriander have been used to treat digestive ailments among other conditions. Cinnamon has been used traditionally for its ability to warm the blood, and its scent for enhancing cognitive function.

Modern western scientific research is starting to show that there is great promise in treating some of our most damaging diseases with the compounds found in these plants. We are beginning to understand the way the so called active ingredients in these spices work in the body. Studies have suggested that these compounds might be useful in the treatment of certain types of cancer, HIV, diabetes, heart disease and other prevalent conditions. Global pharmaceutical companies are beginning to take notice also.

One has been in the limelight recently for the granting of a controversial patent on turmeric.

We may soon see effective drugs for the treatment of some of our most intractable diseases made from the compounds contained in these wonder plants. We may also begin to understand that the road toward prevention is as simple as adding these spices to our favorite foods.

Here are four spices that you should always have handy on your spice rack:

## **Turmeric**

The active ingredient in turmeric is curcumin which is thought to be responsible for its many medicinal effects. Curcumin has been shown to influence more than 700 genes in the body and is a compound so rich in anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory



Photo by Steven Jackson

actions that thousands of studies have shown it to be beneficial in reducing oxidation and chronic inflammation that can trigger many of the diseases so common to modern life. It has also shown promise in clinical studies in these areas:

- Enhances liver function, aids in detoxification
- Rheumatoid Arthritis, anti-inflammatory properties
- Anti-inflammatory properties reduce amyloid inflammation thought in part to promote Alzheimer's

- Shows promise in reducing tumor initiation and promotion
- Helps the body to destroy mutated cancer cells

It is not yet known exactly how curcumin works to help the body in its fight against cancer cells and tumor formation. The studies that have been done so far seem to indicate that it works better with some cancers than others, but this area of research is very promising and ongoing. These are just a few of the areas in which turmeric has shown promise. Its potential for health benefits could be immense.

## Cinnamon

In the west we use cinnamon mainly as a spice in sweet confections which is ironic in that it has shown promise in the treatment of blood sugar problems. Many studies have shown that cinnamon can play an active role in the management of blood sugar levels and the



prevention of other cardiovascular disease risk factors. Scientists theorize that it may mimic the action of insulin in the body allowing sugar to move out of the blood and into the cells. It has also shown promise in these areas:

- Cholesterol problems
- Heart disease

- HIV
- Hypertension
- Influenza

During the 1918 Influenza epidemic workers at cinnamon factories seemed to be much less prone to the contagion. A potent new cinnamon extract may be effective against modern viruses like the Avian Flu.

## Ginger

Ginger has been cultivated and used in India, China and other parts of Asia since ancient times to treat a host of different ailments. In fact the list of conditions for which it has been proscribed is so long that it would take pages to enumerate them. From digestive problems to chronic inflammation its efficacy is legendary. In Ayurveda among other things it is recommended for use as a tea to drink about 20 minutes before the start of a meal to get the digestive juices fired up so that the system can properly and thoroughly digest the food. In modern research it has also been studied for:



- Relief of arthritis pain
- Nausea reduction
- Indigestion



- May be beneficial as an anti-cancer agent
- Elevated triglycerides

In one study researchers found that blood levels of vasopressin, a key hormone they theorize might play a role in nausea from motion sickness, that ginger limited its release in the body.

## Coriander

People sometimes confuse coriander with cilantro because they are from the same plant. Cilantro, an herb, comes from the leaves of the coriander plant. While it has been known to have some medicinal benefits it is not nearly as healthful as the spice coriander which comes from its nutty seeds. Two of the oils in coriander seed



Photo by Candy Tale

(linalool and *geranyl acetate*) are powerful, cell-protecting antioxidants. They're probably behind many of coriander's curative powers, including its ability to soothe digestive ailments. Other conditions which coriander may be effective in reducing are:

- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Colon cancers
- High blood pressure

- Abdominal pain, diarrhea, and constipation
- Cholesterol problems

Researchers have found that coriander works like an antispasmodic drug; it relaxes the digestive muscles that cause the discomfort of Irritable Bowel Syndrome and other gut disorders.

The healing properties of these four spices have been known for centuries in South Asia. And they are just a few of the many spices consumed on a daily basis. Saffron, fennel seed, cardamom, nutmeg, fenugreek and certain types of peppercorns have also shown great promise in some of the compounds they contain. Western scientific research is just starting to unravel the ways in which these compounds work in the body.

One of the most important ways spices may be medically useful is in their proven ability to reduce the impact of excessive inflammation in the body. Inflammation is the body's natural healing response to illness or injury. As the body heals the inflammation subsides. But in some conditions the inflammation does not go away. It becomes chronic and leads to many other problems. Low level inflammation has been implicated as a precursor to many of the most common diseases that affect our modern society.

So keep your spices handy and use them liberally. Experiment with them in both sweet and savory dishes. The internet has made it easy to find recipes in which to use them and how best they complement each other. Not only will they make your food taste great but they may also help you live a long and healthy life.

***You can not teach a man what he believes he already knows.***

***Epictetus***