

Gratitude and appreciation

Research has also shown that it's very helpful if we can spend some time thinking about things we appreciate, like and feel gratitude for. When we are depressed it can be quite difficult to have feelings of gratitude. Nonetheless, if we focus on those feelings it will stimulate parts of the brain that are associated with positive antidepressant feelings. You can start by thinking of a person or key phase in your life, or someone who is showing you some kindness no matter how small, and think about gratitude. The feeling of gratitude is not a grudging or a belittling feeling at all, but a feeling of pleasure and joy that the other person was there and helped you in some way.

Gratitude is not associated with a feeling of obligation. The moment we feel obligated by somebody else's kindness it is difficult to feel gratitude. Focus on the behaviour. One patient noted that although there were things that angered her about her husband, just focusing on her gratitude for him helped her feel more balanced and happier.

The same goes for appreciation. Take your pen and a fresh sheet of paper, and write about the things you appreciate and like in your life. They might be quite small things like the first cup of tea of the day; the blue of a summer sky; certain television programs; the warmth of your bed; a relationship; or part of your job — absolutely anything that gives you feelings of appreciation and liking.

From *Overcoming Depression: A self-help guide using cognitive behavioural techniques* by Paul Gilbert