Gratitude Exercise

From Dr. Martin Seligman, Positive Psychology Course:

This exercise is designed to instill gratitude and life satisfaction about the past.

Most people spend far more time thinking about how they can correct something that has gone wrong (or is about to go wrong) than they do basking in what has gone right. Evolution has seen to it that we remember failures more readily than successes (the Zeigarnik effect), that we analyze bad events more thoroughly than good events, and that we tend to think particularly hard when we are thwarted. This predisposition minimizes life satisfaction and maximizes anxiety and depression.

Noticing and analyzing what goes well in our lives builds the skills of remembering good events and not taking them for granted. It builds gratitude as well. Analyzing why events go well encourages a consciousness of blessings and molds an explanatory style that promotes optimism about the future.

Every night for the next week, right before you go to bed, I would like you to write down three things that went really well on that day. These things can be relatively small in importance ("My husband picked up my favorite ice cream for dessert on the way home from work today.") or relatively large in importance ("My sister just gave birth to a healthy baby boy.") Next to each positive event in your list, answer the question, "Why did this good thing happen?" For example, someone might speculate that her husband picked up ice cream "because my husband is really thoughtful sometimes" or "because I remembered to call him from work and remind him to stop by the grocery store." When asked why her sister gave birth to a healthy baby boy, someone might speculate that "God was looking out for her" or "She did everything right during her pregnancy."

Jot down some observations in your notebook about how you feel different as a result of doing this exercise during the next seven days.

Use this exercise as part of your life routine to remember "the good things in life". It will balance and brighten your outlook.

To access resources that will support you in honouring your emotions so they will benefit you in your life, continue to visit:
www.johannavanderpol.com
This website is continually being updated with new resources and programs for you.

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