



## Lighthouse Employee Assistance Program

Solution focused counseling,  
referrals, and 24/7 crisis support  
419-475-5338 or 800-422-5338

# Understanding Gratitude

"Gratitude implies humility—a recognition that we could not be who we are in life without the contributions of others. Gratitude also implies the recognition that it is possible for other forces to act towards us with beneficial, selfless motives. In a world that was nothing but injustice and cruelty, there would indeed be no possibility of gratitude. Being grateful is an acknowledgement that there are good and enjoyable things in the world." —*Dr. Robert A. Emmons, published in Thanks! How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier*

**Gratitude is a positive emotion** that occurs when you understand and acknowledge that the positive experiences you have in life, small or large, are not owed to you but are gifts. It is the opposite of taking things for granted.

Because of the positive benefits of gratitude on health and happiness, it is important to increasing your resilience to bring the regular practice of gratitude into your life.

### Developing Gratitude

There are a number of exercises that can increase your sense of gratitude in each of these areas. They take just a few minutes a day and can have a life-changing effect:

**Begin each day with a two-minute gratitude session.** Find a quiet space of two minutes, close your eyes if possible, and bring to mind the things and people in your life you are grateful for. Remind yourself that they are gifts, because none of this is owed to you.

### Create a short prayer or affirmation concerning the gifts you have received.

Use this on a daily basis to remind yourself that even though you have worked and planned for what you have, life could have turned out differently.

**Use a daily gratitude journal.** Every day write at least five things that you are grateful for. Make a commitment to do this for at least two weeks, and then work to develop it into a lifelong habit. You will find that this helps you to begin to pay attention to many of the small gifts that come into your life.

**Write a gratitude letter.** After you have identified a person, take a few minutes to write a letter expressing your gratitude, how your life was affected by the person's actions, and specifically what the person did for which you are grateful.

**Focus on the fact that gratitude can turn difficulties into gifts,** and use this truth each time you are faced with a challenge in life.