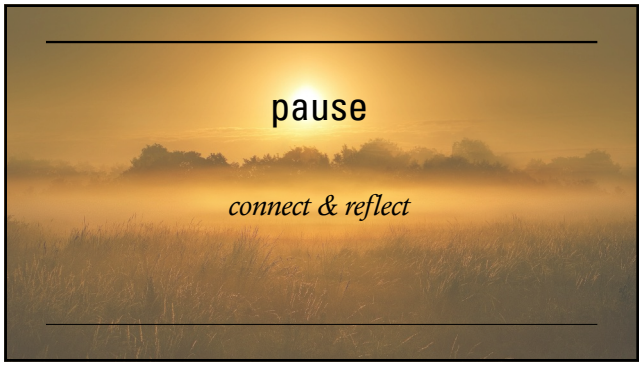

spiritual well-being & longevity…
what's the connection?
Patty Hlava, Ph.D. Sofia University

1


pause
connect & reflect

2


this morning
• Metabolism
• Strength & Stability
• Intimacy & Relationships
• Heart Health
• ……Spirituality?

3

the connecting thread

- Nutrition
- Movement
- Sleep
- *Spirituality*

4



plan

- What does *Spiritual Well-Being* mean?
- Big picture connection to longevity
- How it works
- What it looks like
- Bring it all together

5

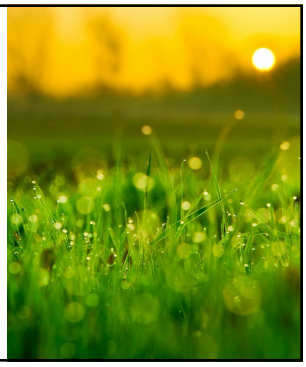
spiritual well-being

An orientation toward meaning, connection, & something greater than the self, expressed with or without religious belief.



6

Does having a reason to get up in the morning, a sense of meaning or purpose, have anything to do with how long we live?



7

What's the Connection?

~24%	~15%	34%
lower risk of earlier death	lower risk even after adjusting for health habits	lower risk of death in women with high purpose

People with a stronger sense of purpose seem to live longer

8

Emotional Resilience: The Awakened Brain

~90%	Thicker cortex	Altruism & love of neighbor
lower risk of depression over 10 years in high-risk families	tied to the importance of spirituality, not attendance	linked to protection from depression

Lisa Miller, Ph.D.

9

cognitive health

- *Spirituality linked to slower cognitive decline*
- *Not about believing harder!*
- *About staying connected to meaning in life*



10

reduces stress

Spiritual Practice/Mindfulness lowers stress markers:

- *Blood pressure*
- *Cortisol*
- *Heart rate*



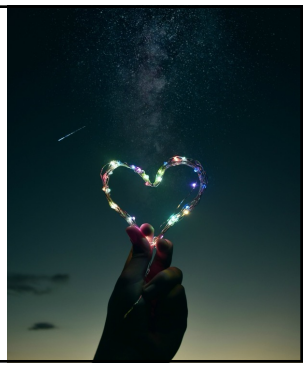
11

So…..how does this actually work?

12

gratitude

- *Worldview shift*
- *Deepens connection*
  - *Self*
  - *Others*
  - *Spiritual*
- *Increased energy*
- *Protects against cardiac risk*



13

awe

- *Brief shift in perspective*
- *Softens Self-focus*
- *Lower inflammation*



14

spiritual practice

- *Increased Gratitude Experience*
- *Increased Awe Experience*
- *Greater Grief Resilience*
- *Stronger Interoception Awareness*



15

embodied transcendence

- *Inclusion of others*
- *Belonging in the world*
- *Body awareness & vitality*
- *Wonder*



16

strengthens relationships

- *Increases compassion*
- *Opens the heart*
- *Fosters belonging*
- *Nurtures engagement*
- *Protective factor against depression!*



17

So…what does this look like in real life?

18

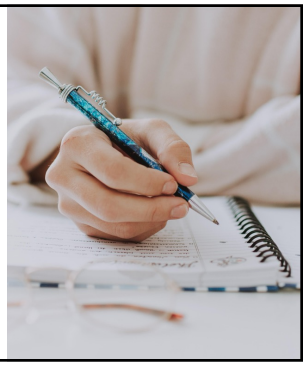
SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING: MORE THAN ZERO MINUTES

Time in nature	*Awe-seeking*	*Quiet reflection*	*Gratitude practice*
Creative expression	*Service to others*	*Meaningful talks*	*Ritual without dogma*

19

measures

- *Transpersonal Gratitude Scale*
- *Embodied Transcendence Scale*



20

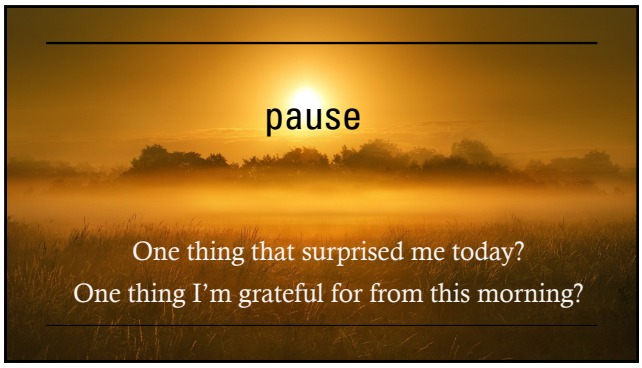
takeaways

Meaning, connection, & purpose

- *Support longevity*
- *Build resilience*
- *Protect against depression*
- *Reduce risk of cog. decline*
- *Ease stress*
- *Deepen connection*
- *Increase hopefulness*
- *Foster belonging*



21



22



23

references

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The Transpersonal Gratitude Scale

At its core, gratitude has been found to be a relational experience between self and other founded on mutual exchange and reciprocal benefit. In caring relationships, the emphasis on fairness and equality of exchange shifts to the maintenance or enhancement of the relationship (Expression of Gratitude Dimension). Feeling grateful toward another becomes recognized as feelings with another, representing a shift from subjective to intersubjective experience, or intra-personal to inter-personal (Value of Gratitude Dimension). When the affective experience of gratitude is particularly deep and overwhelming, the phenomenal experience of a boundary between self and other is temporarily attenuated, resulting in the experience of oneness and identity with the other, cultivating a transpersonal experience (Transcendent Gratitude Dimension). The interpersonal and transpersonal context of such profound feelings may well represent the higher octave of the emotions and motivation related to gratitude-experience.

For some individuals, recognition of the benefits that flow from a divine being or presence is a source of benefit and motivation. These benefits can be experienced as intra-personal and/or transpersonal, and are captured in the Spiritual Connection subscale.

In contrast to an exchange-based model, transpersonal gratitude describes feelings that emerge in response to a transformed view of a benefit and its relationship to the beneficiary. When someone sees himself or herself not as the recipient of a gesture or favor, but as someone participating at the union of an intimate relationship with another person or a profound connection with the entire span of nature, the benefit is no longer tangible or straightforward.

The cognitive appraisal inherent to the emotion-experience of gratitude can create a shift in one's perspective of a relationship, a shift that implies a profound connection with the other. One way to understand transpersonal gratitude is through the recognition of a benefit that derives from a transcendent or transpersonal other. The deliberate cultivation of gratitude is a potential doorway to transpersonal growth and development.

Scores on each subscale of The Transpersonal Gratitude Scale offer insight into the depth and range of gratitude experienced by the individual. The greater the score in each of the subscales, the greater the range and depth of gratitude experienced in each unique domain.

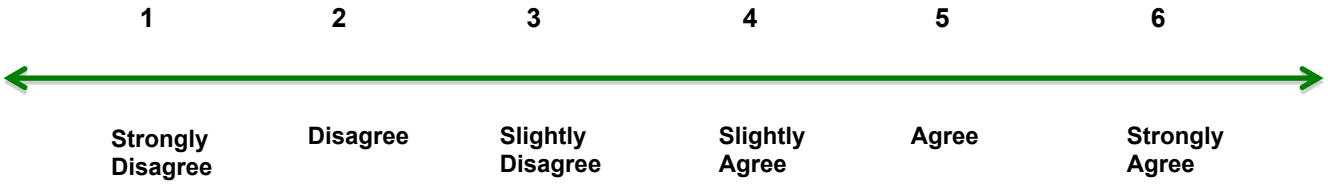
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Dr. Hlava at Patty.Hlava@Sofia.edu
Dr. Elfers at John.Elfers@Sofia.edu

The Transpersonal Gratitude Scale

Using the scale below, write a number from 1 to 6 beside each statement to indicate how much you agree or disagree with it.

Possible Responses



1. _____ Thinking of the blessings that I've received helps me to appreciate life.
2. _____ I show appreciation to others when they have positively influenced my life.
3. _____ Gratitude helps me to feel open with others.
4. _____ I say prayers of thanks for everything I have.
5. _____ Gratitude helps me to feel loving toward others.
6. _____ I feel grateful for just being alive.
7. _____ It is difficult for me to express my gratitude.
8. _____ I become overwhelmed with feelings of gratitude.
9. _____ I know there is a divine presence that is blessing me.
10. _____ I go out of my way to acknowledge favors.
11. _____ Gratitude helps me to address obstacles in my relationships.
12. _____ I am grateful to a divine being for everything in my life.
13. _____ I have patience when I feel gratitude.
14. _____ I thank God for the good things I have in my life.
15. _____ I tell my friends that I am grateful for them.
16. _____ I am grateful for the opportunities I have had in my life.

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Dr. Hlava at Patty.Hlava@Sofia.edu
Dr. Elfers at John.Elfers@Sofia.edu

The Transpersonal Gratitude Scale

Scoring Key

Expression of Gratitude

2. _____
7. _____ (R)
10. _____
15. _____

Total Score: _____
Range 4 to 24

Transcendent Gratitude

1. _____
6. _____
8. _____
16. _____

Total Score: _____
Range 4 to 24

Value of Gratitude

3. _____
5. _____
11. _____
13. _____

Total Score: _____
Range 4 to 24

Spiritual Connection

4. _____
9. _____
12. _____
14. _____

Total Score: _____
Range 4 to 24

(R) Reverse Score this Item
To reverse-score, change the following values: 1 = 6, 2 = 5, 3 = 4, 4 = 3, 5 = 2, 6 = 1

1) **The Expression of Gratitude** is a response to receiving gifts or benefits from someone, or through a heightened sense of connection with another. A recognition that someone has gone out of his/her way to benefit you creates a motivation to express gratitude to that person. In this dimension, the emotion experience of gratitude is enhanced and deepened through the intentional outward expression of the emotion.

2) **The Value of Gratitude** is recognition of the effect that gratitude has on interpersonal relationships. The feeling and expression of gratitude have a positive effect on relationships, creating openness and intimacy. In this dimension, the emotion experience of gratitude adds value to the perceived quality and depth of the relationship. Relationships are enhanced when gratitude is present.

3) **Transcendent Gratitude** results from feeling a benefit that comes from outside of the self, such as the blessings and opportunities encountered in life. In this domain, there is often an intra-personal shift in perception, transforming a worldview to one of abundance. The emotion experience of transcendent gratitude may be intense and powerful.

4) **Spiritual Connection** involves the attribution of benefit as coming from a divine or spiritual source or from God. It is not necessary to believe in a God to attribute benefit to a spiritual presence. In this dimension, there is a conscious appraisal of benefit that elicits the emotion experience of gratitude as having a spiritual origin, and experiencing a sense of connection to that divine presence. How one interprets this connection can depend on a personal view of the spiritual nature of life.

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Dr. Hlava at Patty.Hlava@Sofia.edu
Dr. Elfers at John.Elfers@Sofia.edu