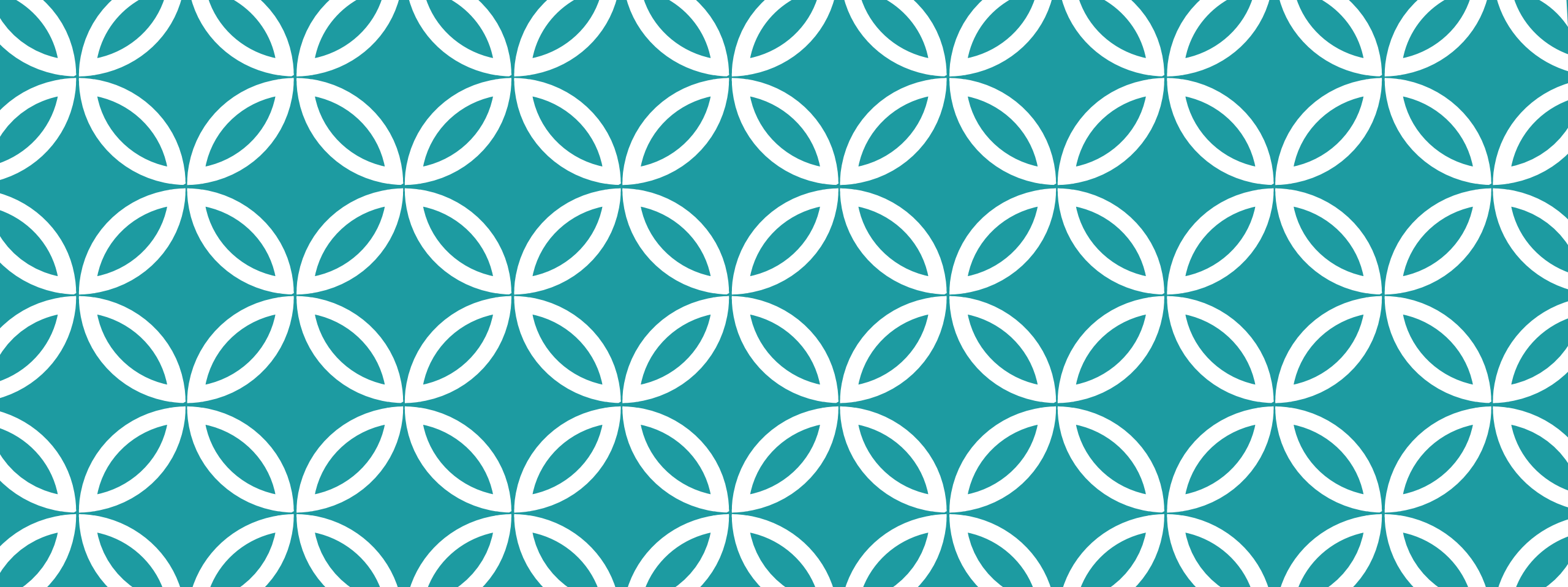


# TRILOGY RESILIENCE 2023

GRATITUDE AT WORK  
With Dr. J



# WHY GRATITUDE



# WHY GRATITUDE?

According to numerous studies, people who express gratitude experience fewer aches and pains and also report feeling healthier than those who don't. They are also more likely to look after their health. Studies have associated gratitude with a number of benefits to physical and mental health. In particular, those who regularly express gratitude can hope to sleep better, have an improved mood and have a boosted immune system.

In addition, studies have shown the benefits of gratitude on psychological health. World-renowned gratitude researchers Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D., has conducted numerous studies that have shown the relationship between gratitude and feelings of happiness. He has also found that gratitude is linked to lower depression rates. Other studies have found that gratitude may also lower anxiety and help people to deal with adversity and build strong relationships. There have also been studies that have shown gratitude to enhance empathy and lower aggression.

# WHY GRATITUDE?

These studies have been further backed up by neuroscientific research, which has revealed that the expression of gratitude can increase the levels of the brain's feel-good chemicals, such as dopamine, oxytocin, and serotonin. These neurochemicals are associated with feelings of connection, closeness, and happiness.

Brain scans of people assigned a task that stimulates expression of gratitude show lasting changes in the prefrontal cortex that heighten sensitivity to future experiences of gratitude. Our brains cannot focus on positive and negative information at the same time, which may explain how practicing gratitude helps to curb negative thoughts and emotions.

While the effects of practicing gratitude are not always immediate, we can work to train our brains to attend to positive emotions to help reduce anxiety and fear.

# GRATITUDE & THE BRAIN

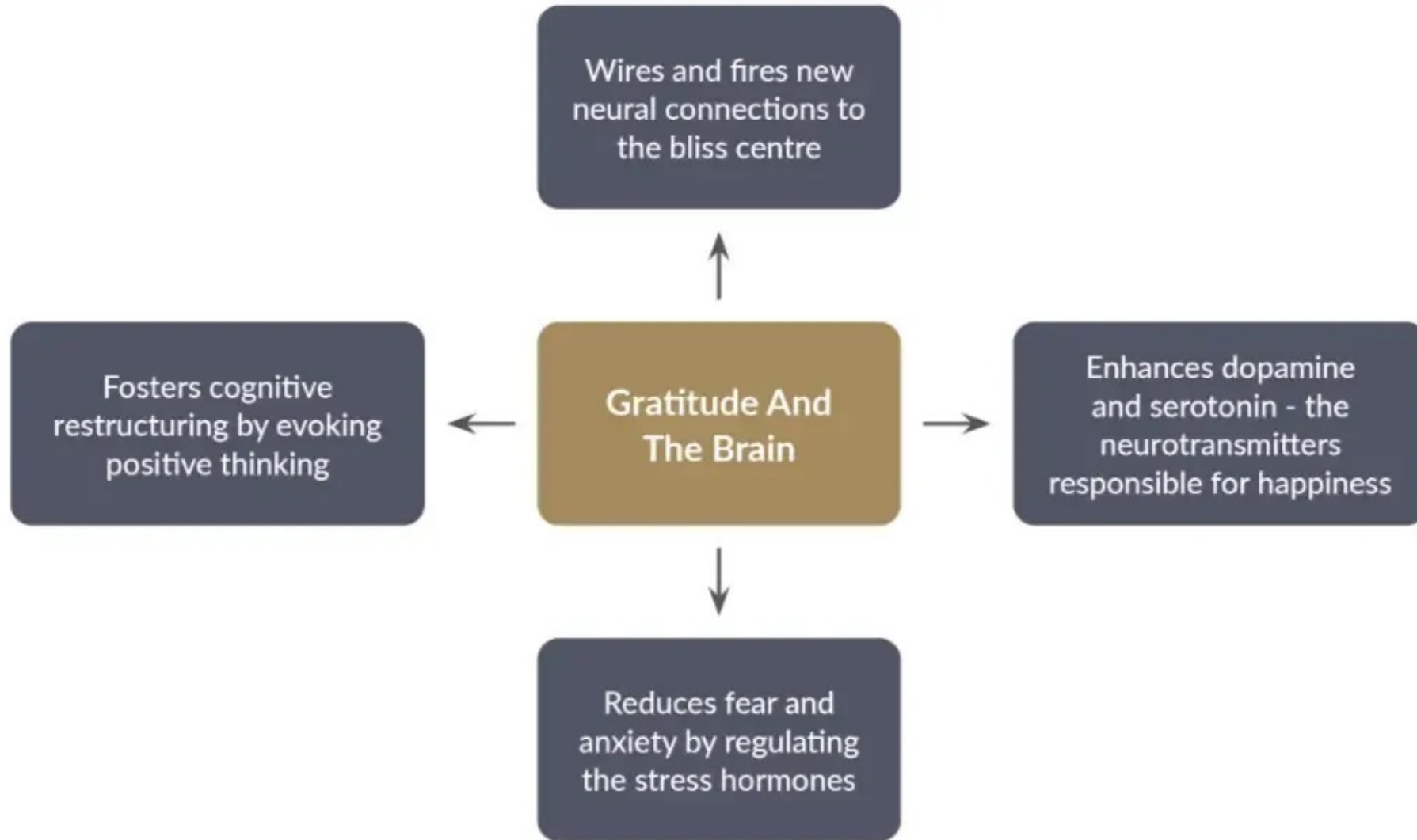
## **Gratitude and the brain\***

Neural mechanisms that are responsible for feelings of gratitude have grabbed attention (Wood et al., 2008). Studies have demonstrated that at the brain level, judgments involving feelings of gratefulness are evoked in the right anterior temporal cortex (Zahn et al., 2009). People who express and feel gratitude have a higher volume of gray matter in the right inferior temporal gyrus.

## **Gratitude and neurotransmitters\***

Emily Fletcher, the founder of Ziva, a well-known meditation training site, mentioned in one of her publications that gratitude as a 'natural antidepressant'. The effects of gratitude, when practiced daily can be almost the same as medications. It produces a feeling of long-lasting happiness and contentment, the physiological basis of which lies at the neurotransmitter level.

When we express gratitude and receive the same, our brain releases dopamine and serotonin, the two crucial neurotransmitters responsible for our emotions, and they make us feel 'good'. They **enhance our mood immediately**, making us feel happy from the inside. By consciously practicing gratitude everyday, we can help these neural pathways to strengthen themselves and ultimately create a permanent grateful and positive nature within ourselves.



# HTTPS://RESEARCH.COM/EDUCATION/SCIENTIFIC-BENEFITS-OF-GRATITUDE

**Gratitude helps improve sleep.** Cultivating gratitude throughout the day nurtures more positive thoughts that can help you drift into a more peaceful sleep. Researchers from the University of Manchester in England examined the correlation between gratitude and the thoughts before sleeping, and how these affect an individual's sleep. Included in the study are 401 adults between 18 to 68 years old. Among the participants, 40% are recorded to have clinically impaired sleep or have sleeping disorders based on their [Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index \(PSQI\)](#) score. By using a cross-sectional questionnaire, the researchers discovered that gratitude drives negatives thoughts away, especially before bedtime, thus making more room for positive thoughts and reflections that contribute to a more peaceful and longer uninterrupted slumber (Wood et al., 2009, p. 43-48).

**Gratitude helps lower high blood pressure.** According to Emmons, gratitude is a good form of medicine. Furthermore, clinical trials have proven that the practice of gratitude can leave lasting positive effects on a person's health. Emmons also states that individuals who have a grateful attitude tend to be more health-conscious, such as avoiding smoking and drinking alcohol, which contributes to neutralizing the blood pressure of hypertensive patients.

# [HTTPS://RESEARCH.COM/EDUCATION/SCIENTIFIC-BENEFITS-OF-GRATITUDE](https://research.com/education/scientific-benefits-of-gratitude)

**Gratitude helps prevent overeating.** Susan Peirce Thompson, Ph.D., a cognitive scientist and expert in the psychology of eating, cites that practicing gratitude reinforces an individual's willpower to resist excessive eating. One can do this by focusing on the food that is on the table and being grateful for it instead of thinking of the dishes they crave but are not available. By harnessing the power of gratitude, the brain also builds resistance against giving in to excessive eating tendencies.

**Gratitude motivates you to exercise more.** An experimental study by Emmons and Michael McCullough looks into the psychological and physical effects of practicing gratitude. In this study, the participants were encouraged to keep gratitude journals that record their activities on a weekly basis. Based on the journals, those who exhibit a more grateful attitude were also the ones who engaged more in healthy physical activities, such as exercising. It is also recorded in the study that the improvement in physical activities also helps improve the participants' outlook on life as a whole (Emmons & McCullough, 2003, pp. 377-389).

**Gratitude helps strengthen the immune system.** Practicing gratitude improves immune function, thus decreasing the risk of contracting diseases (Sood, 2009; Emmons, 2010). This benefit of gratitude goes hand-in-hand with the improvement in the sleeping pattern.



# [HTTPS://RESEARCH.COM/EDUCATION/SCIENTIFIC-BENEFITS-OF-GRATITUDE](https://research.com/education/scientific-benefits-of-gratitude)

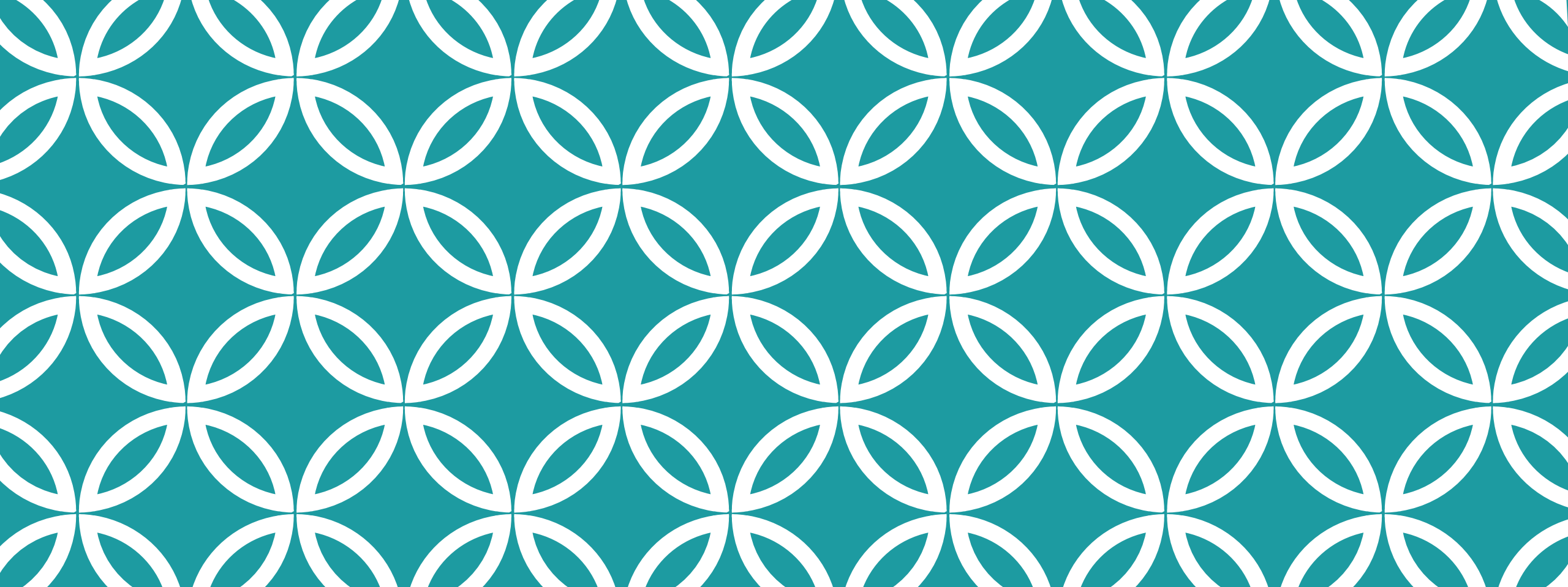
**Gratitude improves pain tolerance.** Studies show that the daily practice of gratitude helps lessen an individual's sensitivity to pain (The Sports & Spinal Group, 2020). According to Bruce F. Singer, a psychologist and founding director of the Chronic Pain and Recovery Center, the practice of gratitude may not completely eliminate chronic pain, but it can be an effective pain management tool as it helps shift the focus away from the physical pain and to the more positive things instead.

**Gratitude helps keep glucose levels under control.** Practicing gratitude has led to lower levels of Hemoglobin A1c, which is a glucose control indicator that helps in the diagnosis of diabetes. According to this study, grateful individuals have been reported to have their Hemoglobin A1c levels decrease by 9-13%.

# [HTTPS://RESEARCH.COM/EDUCATION/SCIENTIFIC-BENEFITS-OF-GRATITUDE](https://research.com/education/scientific-benefits-of-gratitude)

**Gratitude extends the lifespan.** As a positive emotion, gratitude improves an individual's overall well-being. An example of this is how gratitude enhances optimism, which then combats the health hazards brought by fostering a pessimistic outlook in life (Boyles, 2009). According to a medical study that focuses on the risk of developing heart disease and risk for death among women, participants who scored high in optimism only had a 9% risk of developing heart illness. Optimistic women also scored 14% lower risk of dying compared to women who scored high in cynicism and hostility.

**Gratitude helps patients with heart illness.** According to a study, the practice of gratitude contributes to reducing the biomarkers of inflammation by 7% among individuals diagnosed with congestive heart failure (UC Davis Health, 2015).



# GRATITUDE PRACTICES



# JOURNALING

Writing down a few things you are grateful for is one of the easiest and most popular exercises.

The purpose of the exercise is to reflect on the past day, few days, or week, and remember 3-5 things you are especially grateful for. In this way, you are focusing on all the good things that happened to you in a given set of time.

What is the appropriate amount of journaling one should do per week? Some people propose doing it every day while others suggest once per week. The arguments against doing it every day are that it can be tedious and forced. It becomes a practice you feel you should do or need to do instead of something you want to do.

When journaling becomes a boring task and not an enjoyable practice then you need to adjust the amount of journaling you do.

Besides the benefit of focusing on the wonderful things, this practice actually can increase your quality of sleep, decrease symptoms of sickness, and increase joy (Marsh, 2011).

It is important to cater your practice to what you need. Perhaps journaling every day for a short amount of time works for you, but over time, it feels better to journal every Friday.

Paying attention to what you are grateful for becomes easier as you practice it.

# GRATITUDE JAR

The gratitude jar is a stunningly simple exercise that can have profound effects on your wellbeing and outlook. It only requires a few ingredients: a jar (a box can also work); a ribbon, stickers, glitter, or whatever else you like to decorate the jar; paper and a pen or pencil for writing your gratitude notes; and gratitude!

*Step 1:* Find a jar or box.

*Step 2:* Decorate the jar however you wish. You can tie a ribbon around the jar's neck, put stickers on the sides, use clear glue and glitter to make it sparkle, paint it, keep it simple - make it look like you have put some attention and energy into it.

*Step 3:* This is the most important step, which will be repeated every day. Think of at least three things throughout your day that you are grateful for. It can be something as benign as a coffee at your favorite place, or as grand as the love of your significant other or dear friend. Do this every day, write down what you are grateful for on little slips of paper and fill the jar.

Over time, you will find that you have a jar full of a myriad of reasons to be thankful for what you have and enjoy the life you are living. It also will cultivate a practice of expressing thanks.

If you are ever feeling especially down and need a quick pick-me-up, take a few notes out of the jar to remind yourself of who, and what, is good in your life. **In the office, you might just have slips of paper for people to write one thing per day to add.**

# TOUCHSTONES

Using visual reminders. One of the best ways to remind ourselves of the things we have to be grateful for is through visual reminders. This exercise shows how the simple act of taking pictures of the things we appreciate to have in our lives helps us visualize and reinforce gratitude.

# WORDS & ACTS OF KINDNESS

Sharing gratitude with loved ones. Small acts of kindness, especially when they come from the people we are close with (family, relatives, close friends, etc.) are sometimes overlooked. Fortunately, we can train ourselves to be more appreciative of our loved ones' kindness.

We can start by saying "thank you" to small but meaningful gestures we notice, such as loved ones checking how our day went, getting our meals ready, etc. This does not only make us more grateful for the things we have, but it also helps build a stronger relationship with the people we care about.

# LETTERS & NOTES

Giving gratitude letters or notes. Writing a letter of gratitude or even a thank you note to at least one person a week helps significantly improve mental health. This has been proven by a study that involved around 300 adults, all of whom were going through mental health counseling. Writing gratitude letters or notes for the people who have become your source of inspiration has also shown to increase levels of happiness and gratefulness. In a survey by a market research company, it shows that sending appreciation in written form is still very much alive and appreciated.





# GRATITUDE & FOOD

Thanking whomever/whatever you believe in, whether that be God, the universe, spiritual guides, or even yourself for a meal can shift your focus.

Sometimes, we can forget how important food is to our bodies, cultures, and traditions. Having the ability to buy groceries and cook a meal that we enjoy is a gift we should cherish.



# RITUALS IN DAILY LIFE

Establish a specific time to set aside for gratitude to help hold yourself accountable for maintaining an appreciative attitude. We all have our various skincare, bedtime, and exercise routines. However, many of us haven't considered introducing gratitude into our important daily rituals.

# GRATITUDE MAPS

This is a creative, fun and powerful exercise to track what you are grateful for and how it is connected to other things in your life that you might be grateful for.

Put it to paper, marked with arrows, lines, colors, circles, squares and doodles to express energy.

For example: "my job" could have three lines that follow =

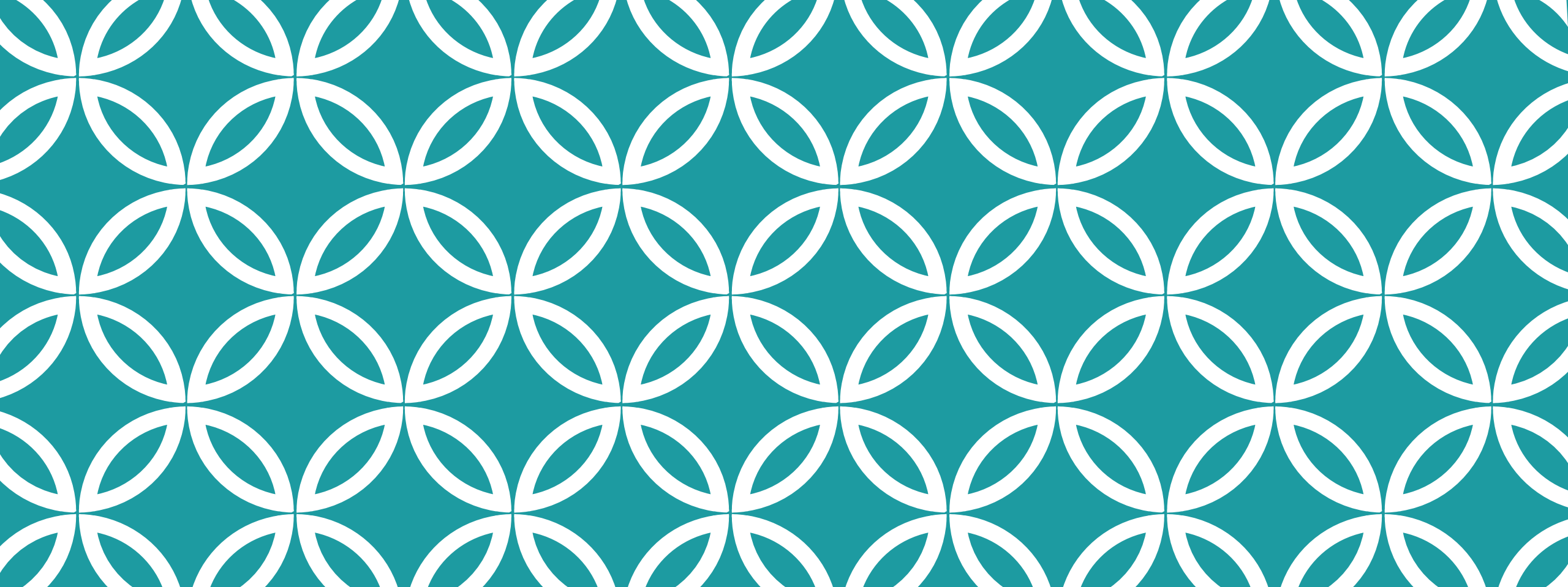
Who I work with, what it gives me, who helped me get the job.

Each one can have a "tree" or lines that follow = how they make me feel, what I like about them, what I am doing with the results, etc...

# CONNECTING WITH GRATITUDE

- \* someone who helped you in a difficult moment
- \* someone you feel grateful for but haven't expressed it
- \* something in your life you are grateful for that you take for granted
- \* something about yourself that you are grateful for but don't think of very often
- \* The practice I will do for this week





**THANK YOU** |