



## THANKFULNESS and HEALING

When we have experienced a loss we are in pain for a long time. Like any injury, physical or emotional, it takes time for us to heal. And like any injury a scar is left. The length of time it takes for us to heal is determined by many factors; the depth of the relationship, the significance of the loss, the suddenness, the lengthen of the separation and the impact and change on our daily lives.

Healing is both a passive and an active process. Part of the healing is a timing issue as we learn to adjust to the loss and changes in our lives. But part of the healing process is determined by what we actively do to help ourselves heal. One of the most effective ways to help ourselves heal from any loss is to foster an attitude of gratitude for what we have had and what we still have in our lives. Studies have documented that the following gratitude focused practices help us heal and foster well being in our lives.

**Thinking Positively:** We have a mental choice to see situations in a positive or negative light. While it is difficult to see any loss in a positive light in reality there are some elements of the loss which can be viewed as positive if we identify them. When we do this we “re-frame” the situation and focus on what was right or good about the experience.

**Being Grateful:** When we focus on the positive we are able to express gratitude for those positive experiences even in the light of loss. This helps us foster the memories of the past and focus on the new experiences of the present both of which will lift up our spirits.

**Expressing Gratitude:** Writing down what we are grateful for helps solidify those positive and appreciative feelings. “Gratitude Journals” encourage writing down several items for which you are grateful every day. It is recommended that you not repeat items but seek to find new areas of gratitude each day. This requires exploring different parts your life and finding a variety of areas for which to be grateful.

**Saying “Thank you”:** As we identify the positive aspects of our life we help ourselves heal by sharing those experiences with the people who have supported us along the way. A written thank you is encouraged because the person receiving it can save it for future recall but a phone call or visit is also helpful and allows for the immediate direct connection.

**Helping Others:** When we see our life in a positive way and are grateful for what we have we are motivated to help others in need. By helping others we help ourselves because we “re- focus” our time and energy outward. This helps us find balance in our lives and increases our awareness of the blessings in our lives.

**The Benefits of Being Thankful:** When we think positively, express gratitude and give of ourselves to others we heal from our losses and reap many benefits including:

- **Being healthy:** We sleep better, have lower blood pressure, have more energy and reduce stress when we are grateful
- **Strengthen relationships:** We have stronger and more meaningful friendships and family connections when we are grateful.
- **Purposeful Life:** We find greater purpose in our lives when we are grateful
- **Joyfulness and Fun:** We have more joy and fun in our lives when we are grateful
- **Spiritual Growth:** We are more connected to the spiritual part of ourselves when we are grateful.
- **We find contentment:** Through gratitude for the positive elements of our lives we learn to be content with what we do have and not focus on what we do not have.

**Think Positively—Be Grateful---Share with Others---- Find Contentment**