

January: Staying Positive

We need more focus on the positive. Allow yourself to be thankful for the small things that give you joy and meaning, as well as the big ones. Counting a handful each day should do it.

Be more aware of what you feel is good in your life, and you will feel good. What is interesting is that scientists who have located thoughts of gratitude in the brain found that not only do they produce feelings of pleasure, they stimulate areas regulating stress. Also, if you're grateful, you're less likely to compare yourself to others, which often leads to unhappiness.

Resilience, including the ability to cope with stress, is another trait correlated with gratitude. Research shows that the more grateful you are, the more you are likely to exhibit patience and self-control. Whatever you do to increase gratitude pays off, so it's worth it to find what is easy, enjoyable and effective for you.

A gratitude journal need not be any more complicated than keeping a notebook by your bed and starting a nightly habit of jotting down who and what you were grateful for that day.

Happiness jars: the idea is to write down on a slip of paper the happiest moment of the day and drop it in a jar. The advantage of doing it this way is that in moments of unhappiness, you can reach into the jar and be reminded of those moments. A variation of this can be recording the happiest moment of your day into the "notes" section of your phone or on a calendar.

How does this relate to Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy?

Being aware of the things you are grateful for each day helps to focus on the positive. When feeling upset, using coping strategies of deep breathing and positive thinking can help you re-focus and calmly communicate your feelings and needs.