

## Ask Your Therapist

By Krishnabai, MSW, LICSW, the Ashby Center for Counseling

### Gratitude

Two years ago while I was in India, one of my traveling companions asked me if I had a specific spiritual practice I did on a daily basis. I said I practiced optimism and gratitude, not in the way a meditator might sit down and meditate for 20 minutes nor the way people do their daily yoga, but as a way of being that lasts throughout my day.

I had started focusing on them in the early 1990's when some MA state regulations changed and I had to go back to school to be able to continue being a private practice therapist. I enrolled in a 3 year program and continued working with my own clients while taking classes. I got tired and grumpy. One day my neighbor suggested I write a Gratitude Journal which sounded so hokey I did not take the suggestion seriously. But the concept began to worm its way into my consciousness and I noticed I began to look for things I was grateful for, so with reluctance, I began to write my gratitudes down. And as I wrote things down, I looked for more to write down and gradually but inevitably, the process turned me around. I became optimistic and filled with gratitude. This practice remains with me today as a core part of who and how I am. And I am grateful for it!

So tell me, Dear Reader, what are you grateful for? Or have you fallen into the cultural trap of cynicism that is so rampant today? It is very easy to fall down that well-oiled chute of negativity, isn't it? It makes a person seem so knowledgeable and in control and urbane to be sarcastic and dismissive but what a shallow well to drink from. There is nothing nourishing in that position, nothing that builds connections between people. It's a dead end road with interesting scenery.

So how do you get started turning your life around? First, intention, then practice and finally, patience. You might go back through my earlier articles on How to Change Using Baby Steps. Set an intention you can actually achieve such as writing down 3 things you feel grateful for every day, or twice a week, whatever you can realistically do. Then increase your practice once you achieve your original goal. Try practicing gratitude during the day and ask other people what they are grateful for. Finally, be patient with yourself and others. Change occurs over time after you've set your intention. It takes time to get out of old patterns and into new ones.

**Please allow me to take this moment to thank all my readers for your kind comments, questions and emails. It is my pleasure and privilege to be of service to you in this way and I am grateful to hear that I have been helpful to you.**

To read all the prior Ask Your Therapist columns go to [www.krishnabai.com](http://www.krishnabai.com) where you can also send Krishnabai a general question for her column.

Krishnabai, MSW is a therapist in Ashby and Wellesley Hills where she sees adults, older teens and couples. The core of her work is the discovery and expression of the Authentic Self. She focuses on the identification, expression, and resolution of emotions, commitment to honesty and the use of remedial education and information. The Ashby Center for Counseling 978-827-1181.