

# Gratitude

*How often do you use gratitude to encourage those you encounter?*

*Do you use it in your own life? If not, a research study (2017) suggests you should...*

Participants were given a small amount of money by a benefactor, asking them to only pass the money on to someone if they felt grateful and how much money they wanted to pass on to a worthy cause. They were also asked to rate how grateful they felt toward the benefactor and how much they wanted to help each cause.

Lastly, some were asked to write a gratitude letter following the experiment, and an fMRI scanner was used to measure brain activity both during the experiment and while writing letters.

**Findings:** When people were generally more grateful, they gave more money to a cause, and showed greater neural sensitivity in the medial prefrontal cortex (e.g., area of learning and decision making). Greater activation in the medial prefrontal cortex was also shown in those who wrote gratitude letters vs. those who did not.

This effect was found three months after the letter writing began, indicating that simply expressing gratitude may have lasting effects on the brain.

