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# Scientists Show How Gratitude Literally Alters The Human Heart & Molecular Structure Of The Brain



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By **Arjun Walia** 





## IN BRIEF

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**The Facts:** Scientists have discovered that feelings of gratitude can actually change your brain. Feeling gratitude can also be a great tool for overcoming depression and anxiety. Furthermore, scientists have discovered that the heart sends signals to the brain.

**Reflect On:** Every time we struggle with depression, why are we constantly encouraged to take prescription medication when mindfulness techniques actually show more promise?

Gratitude is a funny thing. In some parts of the world, somebody who gets a drink of water, some food, or a worn out pair of shoes can be extremely grateful. Meanwhile, somebody else who has all the necessities they need to live is found complaining about something. What we have today is what we once had before, but there is a lingering belief out there that obtaining material possessions is the key to happiness. Sure, this may be true, but that happiness is temporary. The truth is that happiness is an inside job.

It's a matter of perspective, and in a world where we are constantly made to feel like we are lacking and always 'wanting' more, it can be difficult to achieve or experience actual happiness. Many of us are always looking toward external factors to experience joy and happiness, when really it's all related to internal work. Something science is just starting to grasp as well, as shown by research out of UCLA's Mindfulness Awareness Research Center. [According to them:](#)

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*Having an attitude of gratitude changes the molecular structure of the heart, keeps gray matter functioning, and makes us healthier and happier. When you feel happiness, the central nervous system is affected. You are*

*peaceful, less reactive and less resistant. Now that's a really cool way of taking care of your well-being.*

There are many studies showing that people who count their blessings tend to be far happier and experience less depression. For one study, researchers compared people with mental health difficulties, including people suffering from anxiety and depression. The [study](#) involved nearly 300 adults who were randomly divided into three groups. This study came from the University of California, Berkeley.

All groups received counselling services, but the first group was also instructed to write one letter of gratitude to another person every week for three weeks, whereas the second group was asked to write about their deepest thoughts and feelings about negative experiences. The third group did not do any writing.

What did they find? Compared to the participants who wrote about their negative experiences or only received counselling, those who wrote [gratitude letters](#) reported significantly better mental health for up to 12 weeks after the writing exercise ended.

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*This suggests that gratitude writing can be beneficial not just for healthy, well-adjusted individuals, but also for those who struggle with mental health concerns. In fact, it seems, practicing gratitude on top of receiving psychological counseling carries greater benefits than counseling alone, even when that gratitude practice is brief. ([source](#))*

Previously, a study on gratitude conducted by Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D. at the University of California, Davis and his colleague Mike McCullough at the University of Miami randomly assigned participants to be given one of three tasks. Each participant kept a short journal. One group described five things they were grateful for that had occurred in the past week, another group recorded their troubles from the previous week that displeased them, and the neutral group was asked to list five events or circumstances that affected them, but they were not told whether to focus on the positive or the negative. Ten weeks later, participants in the gratitude group felt better about their lives as a whole and were a full 25%

happier than the troubled group. They reported fewer health complaints and exercised an average of 1.5 hours more. ([source](#))

Researchers from Berkeley identified how gratitude might actually work on minds and bodies. They provided four insights from their research on what causes the psychological benefits of gratitude.

- **Gratitude unshackles us from toxic emotions**
- **Gratitude helps even if you don't share it**
- **Gratitude's benefits take time & practice. You might not feel it right away.**
- **Gratitude has lasting effects on the brain**

The brain part is very interesting. The [researchers at Berkeley](#) used an fMRI to measure brain activity while people from each group did a “pay it forward” task. During the task, the participants were given money by a “nice person.” This only request was that they pass on the money to someone if they felt grateful.

They did this because they wanted to distinguish between actions motivated by gratitude and actions driven by other motivations like obligation, guilt, or what other people think. This is important because you can't fake gratitude, you have to *feel* it. If you don't feel grateful or practice trying to feel grateful through the necessary steps like keeping a gratitude journal, you may not experience much joy and happiness.

## STAY AWARE

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In a world where emotions aren't really taught in school and the importance on striving for high grades, it's not abnormal to have difficulty feeling grateful.

is especially understandable if you've been brought up in the western world which is full of consumerism and competition, a world where we're constantly told we are lacking so we need to strive for more.

Participants were asked to rate how grateful they felt toward the person they gave them the money and how much they wanted to pay it forward to a charitable cause as well as how guilty they thought they would feel if they didn't help. They were also given questionnaires to measure how grateful they felt in general.

*We found that across the participants, when people felt more grateful, brain activity was distinct from brain activity related to guilt and the desire to help a cause. More specifically, we found that when people who were generally more grateful gave more money to a cause, they showed greater neural sensitivity in the medial prefrontal cortex, a brain area associated with learning and decision making. This suggests that people who are grateful are also more attentive to how they express gratitude.*

*Most interestingly, when we compared those who wrote the gratitude letter with those who didn't, the gratitude letter writers showed greater activation in the medial prefrontal cortex when they experienced gratitude in the scanner. This is striking as this effect was found three months after the writing began. This indicates that simply expressing gratitude may have lasting effects on the brain. While not conclusive, this finding suggests that practicing gratitude may help train the brain to be more sensitive to the experience of gratitude down the line, and this could contribute to improved mental health over time.*

It's also interesting to note that a recent study just discovered a brain region that "gives rise to feelings of gratitude. The study could spur future investigations into how these 'building blocks' transform social information into emotions." ([source](#))

## What About The Heart?

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The work and research above is great, but where do we actually experience these feelings? They are clearly not a product of our brain, they are products of our heart.

consciousness, and when we feel them the brain responds. Researchers are discovering that the heart also responds and that it might actually be that's responsible for sending these signals to the brain.

A group of prestigious and internationally recognized leaders in physics, biophysics, education, mathematics, engineering, cardiology, biofeedback psychology (among other disciplines) have been doing some brilliant work at the [Institute of HeartMath](#).

Their work, among many others, has proven that when a person is feeling positive emotions like gratitude, love, or appreciation, the heart beats out a message, which determines what kind of signals are sent to the brain.

Not only that, but because the heart beats out the largest electromagnetic field produced in the body, the Institute has been able to gather a significant amount of data.

According to Rolin McCraty, Ph.D, and Director of Research at Heartmath,

*“Emotional information is actually coded and modulated into these fields. When we are learning to shift our emotions, we are changing the information code that the magnetic fields that are radiated by the heart, and that can influence those around us. We are fundamentally and deeply connected with each other and the planet itself.” [\(source\)](#)*

Another great point made below by the Institute:

*“One important way the heart can speak to and influence the brain is that the heart is coherent – experiencing stable, sine-wavelike patterns and rhythms. When the heart is coherent, the body, including the brain, begins to experience all sorts of benefits, among them are greater mental clarity and ability, including better decision making.” [\(source\)](#)*

In fact, the heart actually sends more signals to the brain than the brain sends back. What's even more amusing is the fact that these heart signals (from the brain) actually have a significant effect on brain function.

*Research findings have shown that as we practice heart coherence radiate love and compassion, our heart generates a coherent electromagnetic wave into the local field environment that facilitates coherence, whether in the home, workplace, classroom or sitting around a table. As more individuals radiate heart coherence, it builds an energetic field that makes it easier for others to connect with their hearts. Theoretically it is possible that enough people building individual and collective coherence could actually contribute to an unfolding global coherence.*

[McCratey](#)

So far, the researchers have discovered that the heart communicates with the mind and body in four ways: neurological communication (nervous system), bioelectromagnetic communication (pulse wave), biochemical communication (hormones), and energetic communication (electromagnetic fields).

*“HeartMath research has demonstrated that different patterns of heart activity (which accompany different emotional states) have distinct effects on cognitive and emotional function. During stress and negative emotions, when the heart rhythm pattern is erratic and disordered, the corresponding pattern of neural signals traveling from the heart to the brain inhibits higher cognitive function. This limits our ability to think clearly, remember, learn, reason, and make effective decisions. In contrast, the ordered and stable pattern of the heart’s input to the brain during positive emotional states has the opposite effect. It facilitates cognitive function and reinforces positive feelings and emotional stability.”* ([source](#))

## Gratitude and Positive Feelings Can Change The World

It gets deeper:

*Every individual's energy affects the collective field environment. The more each person's emotions and intentions generate an energy that affects the field. A first step in diffusing societal stress in the global field is for each of us to take personal responsibility for our own energies. We can do this by increasing our personal coherence and raising our vibratory rate, v*

*helps us become more conscious of the thoughts, feelings, and attitudes that we are feeding the field each day. We have a choice in every moment to take to heart the significance of intentionally managing our energies. It is the free will or local freedom that can create global cohesion. – Dr. Dek Rozman, the President of Quantum Intech ([source](#))*

Overall, this type of work suggests that human consciousness in general can change the world.

One study, for example, was done during the Israel-Lebanon war in the 1980s. Harvard University professors organized groups of experienced meditators in Jerusalem, Yugoslavia and the United States and asked them to focus their attention on the area of conflict at various intervals over a 27-month period. Over the course of the study, the levels of violence in Lebanon decreased between 40 and 80 percent each time a meditating group was in place. The average number of people killed during the war each day dropped from 12 to three, and war-related injuries dropped 50 percent. ([source](#))

Another great example is a study that was conducted in Washington, D.C. in 1993 which showed a 25 percent drop in crime rates when 2,500 meditators were present during a specific period of time with that intention.

This type of information is heavily correlated with quantum physics, and experiments in that area as well as parapsychology (telepathy, remote viewing, distant healing) indicate similar findings. ([source](#))

This holds true as far back as 1999. Statistics professor Jessica Utt at the University of California, Irvine [published a paper](#) showing that parapsychological experiments produced much stronger results than those showing a daily dose of aspirin to prevent heart attacks. Utt's research also showed that these results are much stronger than the research behind various drugs like antiplatelets.

This type of work has statistically significant implications, yet is heavily ignored and labelled as pseudoscience simply because it conflicts with long-held beliefs. It's a real trouble letting go of ... But times are changing.

*“For many years I have worked with researchers doing very careful work [in parapsychology], including a year that I spent full-time working on a classified project for the United States government, to see if we could test these abilities for intelligence gathering during the Cold War... At the end of that project I wrote a report for Congress, stating what I still think is true: there is data in support of precognition and possibly other related phenomena that are quite strong statistically, and would be widely accepted if it pertained to something more mundane. Yet, most scientists reject the possibility of these abilities without ever looking at data! And on the other extreme, there are true believers who base their beliefs solely on anecdotes and personal experience. I have asked debunkers if there is any amount of data that would convince them, and they generally have responded by saying, “probably not.” I ask them what original research they have read, and they never admit that they haven’t read any. Now there is a definition of pseudoscience: basing conclusions on belief rather than data!” – Utts, Chair of the Psychology Department, UC Irvine (Dean Radin, Real Magic)*

## The Takeaway

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Emotions and other factors associated with consciousness have the power to transform our inner world in ways we don’t fully understand yet. These findings show how consciousness can actually transform the physical/material world, and that’s huge. This validates the idea that if we can change our inner world through gratitude, empathy, compassion, and meditation, we can make our outer world more peaceful.

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## Dive Deeper

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These days, it’s not just knowing information and facts that will create change; it’s changing ourselves, how we go about communicating, and re-assessing the underlying stories, ideas and beliefs that form our world. We have to practice these things if we truly want to change. At Collective Evolution and CETV, this is a core part of our mission.

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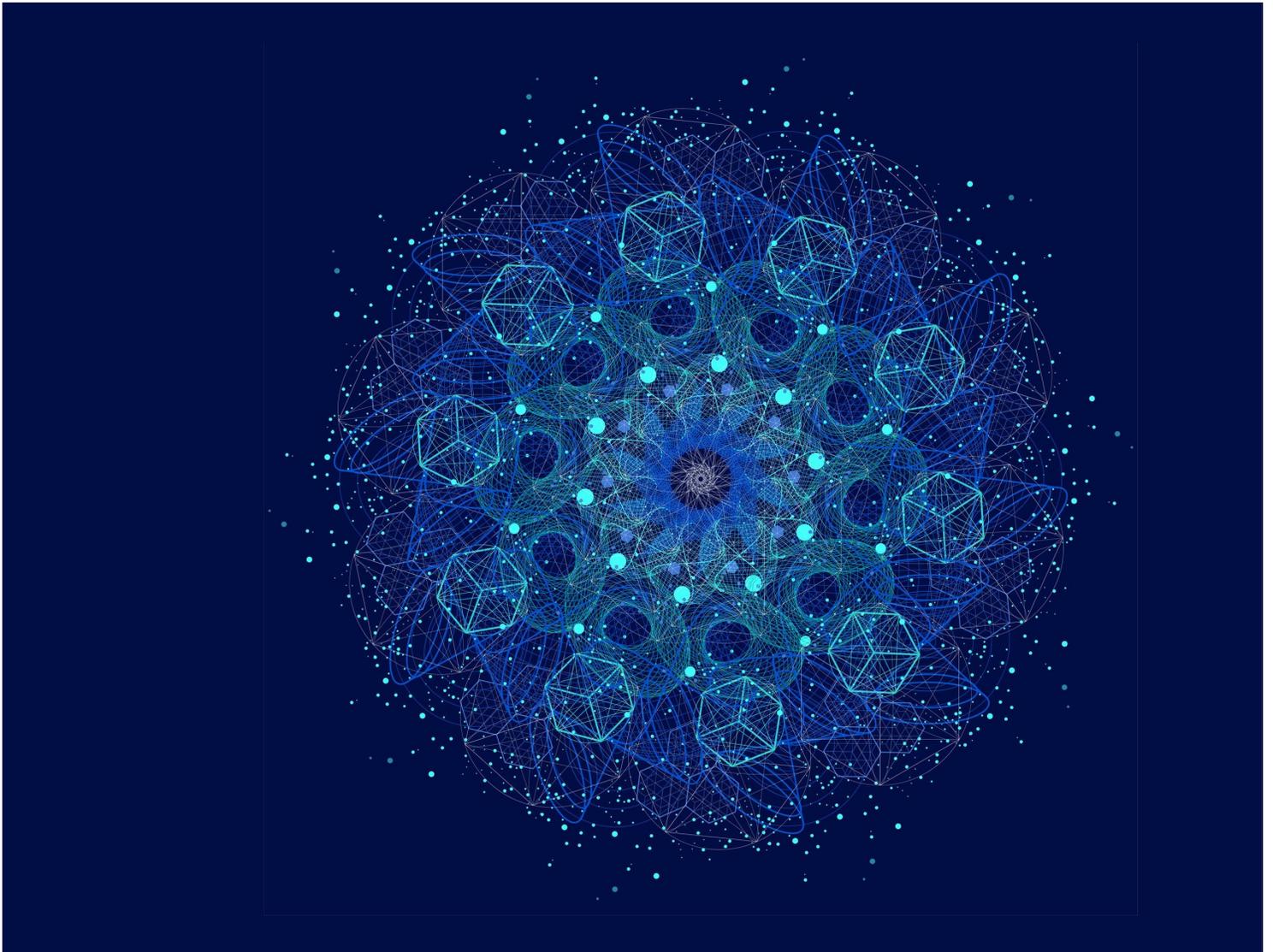
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Published 3 days ago on January 24, 2021  
By **Collective Evolution**



In a riveting discussion Wayne Morris interviews CE founder Joe Martino on [Breathing Deep](#) podcast. They explore making sense of our current world through a spiritual perspective. In the episode, you'll explore what Collective Evolution is about, its history and objectives of investigating current events and the work of personal transformation and expanding consciousness. They discuss the power of curiosity, belief vs. knowing, what is truth, and how the failures of modern science dogma are contributing to public confusion. We talk about the pitfalls of navigating "conspiracies", confirmation bias, the polarization of the public discussion around Covid and how we can individually and collectively determine truth in a more rational and scientific way.

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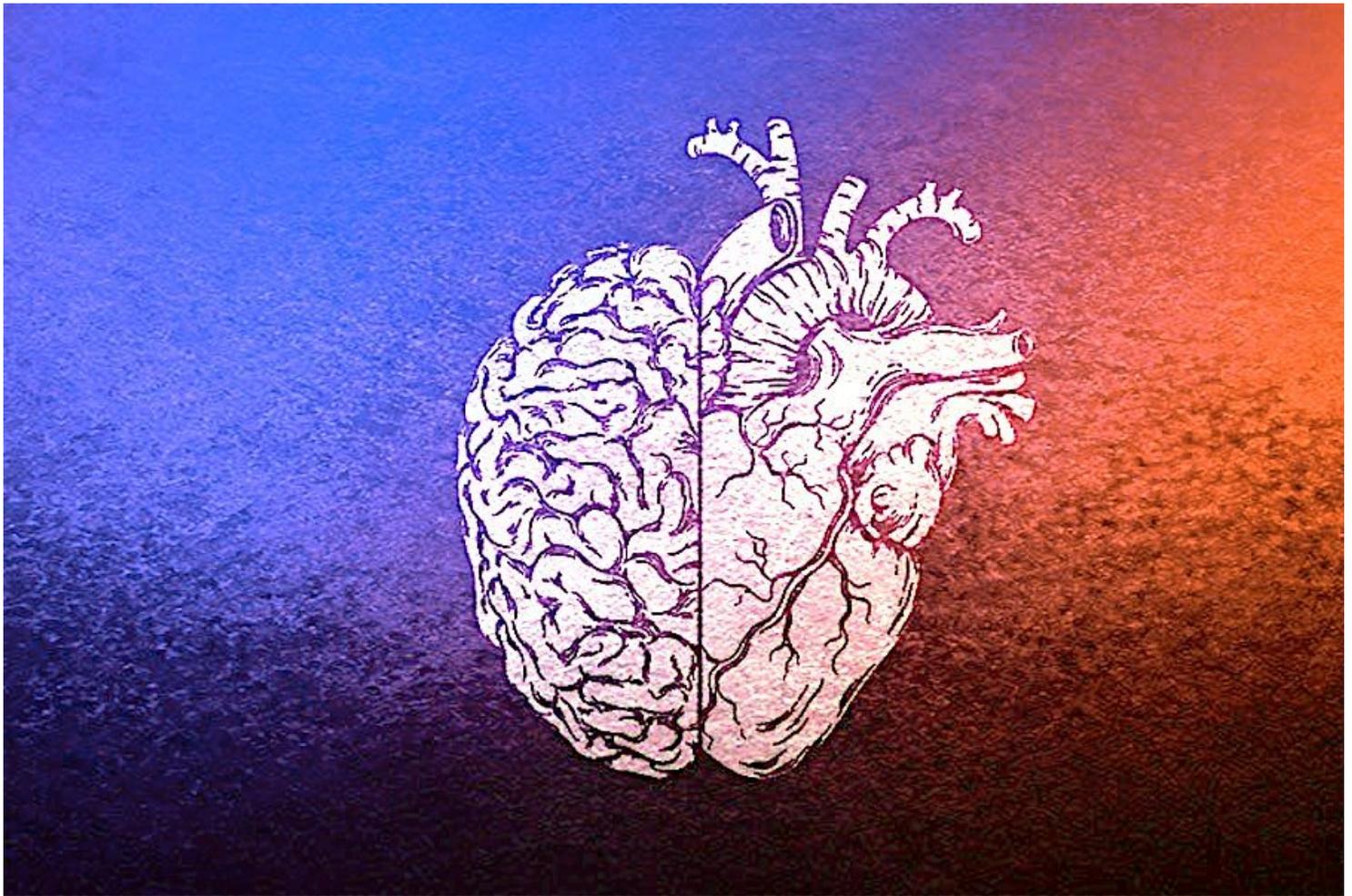
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Published 1 week ago on January 18, 2021

By **Arjun Walia** 



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Published 2 weeks ago on January 12, 2021

By **Carmen Di Luccio**



We are having a New Moon in Capricorn on January 13th throughout most of world and on the night of the 12th in Central to Western North America. This is initiating a 29.5 day lunar cycle and new wave of energy for the coming month.

however, the astrological configurations mentioned in this article will be prominent over the following two weeks. This cycle will include a Full Moon in on January 28th/29th.

Capricorn season began on the December 21st solstice, just over three weeks prior to this lunation, and will end on January 19th/20th when Aquarius season begins.

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