



**Gratitude Helps Brain Function!**

News flash! Scientists say that your brain will function more effectively if you practice gratitude and appreciation.

Our brain can change, reorganize, adapt, learn, and reprogram itself to a new wiring regardless of our age, previous experience, or current challenges. A revolutionary discovery in neuroscience, called *neuroplasticity*, has confirmed that our brain is not a fixed, hardwired machine but rather a vital and tirelessly evolving organ in our body . .

In an experiment with psychologist Dr. Noelle Nelson, author of *Power of Appreciation*, he came to the astounding discovery that practicing gratitude and appreciation might improve our overall brain function. [http://www.noellenelson.com/book\\_powerofappreciation.cfm](http://www.noellenelson.com/book_powerofappreciation.cfm)

First, Dr. Amen had Dr. Nelson meditate on positive thoughts, happy feelings, and things for which she felt grateful. After thirty minutes, he scanned her brain and discovered that it looked healthy and functional.

Several days later, Dr. Amen had Dr. Nelson meditate on negative emotions and fears in her life, and then he scanned her brain again. This time, the scan revealed seriously decreased activity in two parts of her brain: her cerebellum, responsible for processing information; and the temporal lobes, responsible for memory and emotion control. If these parts of our brain are not working well, we feel confused and depressed, unable to make sound decisions. When Dr. Nelson was focused on negative thoughts and potential problems, her brain basically shut down! When this happens, we become emotionally unbalanced and unable to function optimally.

So what can you do to improve your brain function and feel better overall? Dr. Amen suggests that we should all, daily, think about the positive aspects of our life and make a list of five things for which we feel grateful. So, get your pen and paper out, think about what you're thankful for in your life, and help your brain work better today!