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COME312A, Spring 2024

3/7/2024

Reflection on Gratitude Journaling Activity

For our student-led activity, we led a flower-shaped journaling activity to allow people to reflect on what they are grateful for. Students were instructed to draw a plain flower on a sheet of paper, allowing enough space to write in each of the petals. They were then instructed to journal about things they were grateful for in the current moment within each of the petals. Once everyone had finished journaling, students discussed their current emotions and thoughts related to the activity with one another.

When we first started brainstorming ideas for our activity, our minds immediately went to some type of gratitude journal. Upon further research, we came up with the idea to make it flower-shaped with spring coming up. Journaling in general is highly beneficial, but journaling about gratitude is overwhelmingly filled with benefits. It has been proven that benefits of journaling specifically about gratitude are exceptionally better than when journaling about happiness (Benjamin, J., & Holliman, A., pg. 51). While journaling about happiness is still beneficial, journaling about gratitude and thankfulness allows people to think more in-depth about it, which leaves a greater impact on mental health and psychological well-being. We chose to specify that people should journal about gratitude rather than things that have made them happy recently because it is more beneficial and allows for deeper thoughts. Another benefit related to gratitude journaling is that it increases other positive feelings and thoughts, which creates an even greater effect on mental health. Having higher feelings of gratitude allows people to more strongly develop their senses of self-compassion and self-acceptance. Typically people

who devote time to journaling or thinking about gratitude are more accepting of themselves and treat themselves more kindly than people who do not analyze their gratuity (Hikmawati, F, et al. pg. 224). Self-compassion allows people to not be as harsh on themselves and to be as kind to themselves as they are to other people. Self-compassion and self-acceptance can play a large role in bettering someone's mental health. By practicing gratitude, self-compassion, and self-acceptance, mental health can be greatly benefited, so I would urge everyone to begin journaling about their gratitude. After learning of these benefits of gratitude, we were happy we had the idea to focus on gratitude, as it is very beneficial for psychological well-being. I have been journaling more about gratitude since beginning research for this project and have seen many changes in my mood and stress levels. By focusing on things I am thankful for, I spend less time worrying about things that may be out of my control, so I believe gratitude journaling has immense benefits.

I believe our activity went well. From hearing parts of everyone's conversations, it sounded like people enjoyed the activity and psychologically benefited from participating. In the future, I would have allowed more time for people to share their thoughts with the whole class, as I was interested to hear people's thoughts. I believe Stephanie and I both contributed equally, both while presenting and while constructing the presentation. We were able to meet outside of class to work through our slides and research our topic together. Overall, I am happy with the work we were able to produce together. As a result of completing this project, I have spent more time journaling about things I am grateful for in the current moment of journaling and believe it has greatly impacted my mental health. Gratitude journaling does not have to include any fancy prompts or long-winded answers; even jotting down a short list of things you are grateful for makes a big difference.

Reference Page

- Benjamin, J., & Holliman, A. (2022). Examining the Influence of a Gratitude Journal Intervention on University Students' Psychological Wellbeing and Engagement (A Pilot Study). *Psychology of Education Review*, 46(2), 49–51. <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsper.2022.46.2.49>
- Hikmawati, F., Azizah, N., Basyai, A. C. P., & Ramdani, Z. (2023). Improving Self-Acceptance of Body Shaming using Gratitude Journal Method. *International Journal of Psychology & Psychological Therapy*, 23(2), 221–229.