

# Tell Yourself 'Thanks!'

By Cheryl Russell

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white ribbed cardigan, is holding a brown paper sign in front of her face. The sign has the word "THANKS!" written on it in bold, yellow, sans-serif capital letters. The background is a light-colored wooden wall decorated with twine, dried flowers, and a heart-shaped object.

**THANKS!**

From your head to your toes, your body does a lot for you. Thinking thoughts of appreciation is key to enhancing a body-mind connection that supports your highest good, says the author of *Thankyouology*.

"If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough."

—Meister Eckhart

There is a simple elegance about the words "thank you." Having grown up with Unity teachings, I know that a gratitude consciousness is the essence of my being. So much so that thank you is a core value of my personal mission statement—to create a lifestyle of simple elegance. Thank you is my compass, my heartbeat, my way of life. Thank you is my mantra, my simple elegant prayer. The more I explore the art of saying thank you, the more I discover its infinite life-changing potential.

My faith in God and a grateful heart have manifested world travels, rewarding careers and magical places to live. And yet, at an early age, I had health issues. My body was challenged by surgeries, car accidents and illnesses of one kind or another. I even had ongoing bruises for which I had no explanation.

What was I missing? In my prayers I thanked God for my life and used positive affirmations about my health. What else could I do to support my body, mind and spirit for improved well-being? Could the answer to greater health be found in the power of thank you? I decided to find out with a simple experiment. Instead of acting mad or as if nothing happened, what if I stopped the minute I had an injury, regardless of how small or seemingly insignificant? What if I acknowledged the injured area of my body with thank you? Would the pain or bruise be less, or possibly not at all?

My first experiment occurred in the middle of the night when I got out of bed, walked into a door jamb

and whacked my nose. Back in bed, I rubbed my hands together and put them over my nose. I apologized and repeatedly said thank you for all that it does for me. The next morning, there was no bruise, no soreness. Nothing!

Beginner's luck? Maybe. Next time I was in a beauty salon when a ceiling light fell and hit my forearm. When people rushed over, I was soothing myself with words of gratitude for it. Again, no bruising. No soreness. Since then, I rarely bruise.

My body's response to the experiments launched a new chapter in ThankYouology—my philosophy of how the art of saying thank you with thoughts, words and actions transforms your life. What I discovered is the more I said thank you to my body, the more it responded with greater energy and vitality. I found that saying thank you to my body grounds me in the present moment to receive more of God's grace. Appreciation for my body keeps me focused on its divine gifts rather than any symptoms I might be experiencing. I have always been in awe of God's magnificence in my outer world. Now I direct that same reverence toward my body with what I call Body ThankYouology.

We start with our thoughts; we think thousands of them each day. How many thoughts of appreciation are you directing toward your body? Consider what is written in Proverbs: "For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The Buddha stated: "Our life is the creation of our mind." The Peace Pilgrim sums it up with "If you realized how powerful your thoughts are, you would never think a negative thought."

Your body will really appreciate it when you take the time to practice thank-you meditations and write thank-you letters. Yes, a thank-you letter!

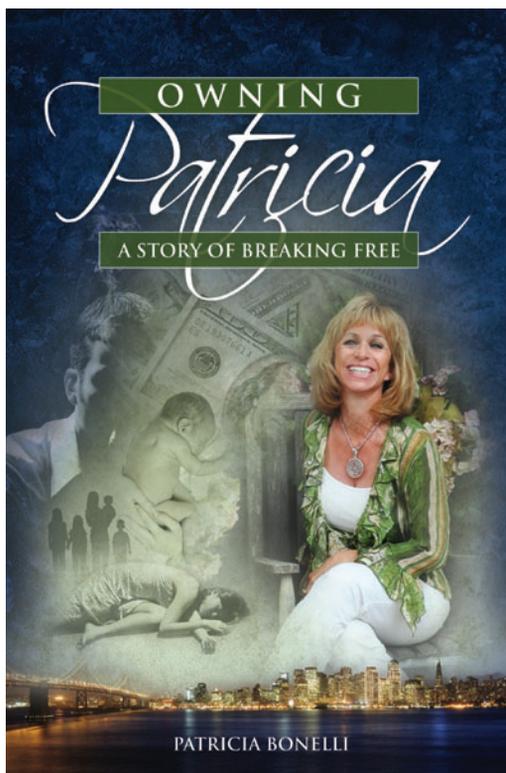
Regardless of how you are feeling in this moment, what are your thoughts about your body? Are you thankful for everything it is doing on your behalf? Do you appreciate your cells? Your bones? Your organs such as the liver? According to the book *Own Your Own Body*, by Dr. Stan D. Malstrom, if the functions of the liver were reproduced, it would require the equivalent space of a square block, five stories high. Talk about being in awe! You bet I have thank-you thoughts about my liver—all the time!

You can have fun with thank-you thoughts for your body with this

simple suggestion. Make a list from A to Z of adjectives that begin with the same letter as each part of your body. For example: adorable arm, beautiful brain and lovely liver. Using descriptive adjectives increases the power of your appreciation toward your body and its functions. Once you have created your A-Z list of adjectives, use it to praise your body with thank-you affirmations. A simple example is *thank you happy heart*. Recite your customized affirmations during any activity such as walking, climbing stairs, driving the car and doing household chores. Sing your thank-

you affirmations if you are so inclined. If you enjoy writing poetry, try thank-you rhymes like this one: Thank you to my exciting eyes and thank you to my precious pancreas—you are such a prize!

Your body will really appreciate it when you take the time to practice thank-you meditations and write thank-you letters. Yes, a thank-you letter! Write a detailed letter of gratitude to your body, make it special and do it often, just as you would write endearing letters to loved ones. For a thank-you meditation, sit in a quiet space and close your eyes. Using your



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Patricia Bonelli's "*Owning Patricia*", is a raw, tender inspirational true story of a grown woman retracing her youthful missteps into darkness. Bonelli's purpose of fully embracing her story, owning who she was in the past, in order to command her life in the present, provides inspiration for anyone who might themselves dare to illuminate a less than pristine past.

A-Z adjectives, start at the top of your head or with your feet, and say thank you to each part of your body during your focused visualization. This is a great meditation to help you fall asleep at night.

Saying thank you to your body also means paying attention to what you say about it, such as “pain in the neck,” “bad back” or “that makes me sick.” Another expression worth omitting in conversation is “I would give my right arm to have (fill in the blank).” I won’t trade my body parts for anything, and I prefer to live for something rather than to die for it. Even though these may be figures of speech, your body responds to what it hears.

I believe thank-you thoughts and thank-you words equal the delight of thank-you actions. Two of my favorites are Laughter Yoga and skin brushing. Use your A-Z adjectives to say thank you—up close and personal—to each part of your body when you gently scrub your skin with a soft, dry brush. Or, say thank you to your body as you lovingly pat yourself all over from head to toe. Do this daily and see what happens.

*Hu*, an ancient word for God, could mean that there is “more God” in humor. I definitely feel closer to God when I lead laughter yoga classes. I can feel God’s love shining through each person as we laugh for the fun of it. Participants often tell me that laughing for exercise improves their emotional and physical health. I am grateful that prominent media have reported at one time or another on the extensive benefits of this mind-body activity, which is practiced across the nation and around the world.

Lifestyle choices provide many opportunities to express appreciation to your body. Are you eating a nutritious diet, taking daily walks

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and drinking lots of water? Is there a balance between the demands of your day to keep stress, fear and anxiety out of your mind, body and spirit? Are you conscious of your breath and do you take time to simply breathe? Spiritus means breath in Latin. Say your most grateful thank you to Spirit and your body for this vital life force with slow, deep breaths.

Scripture assures us that “all things are possible through God”—the Source

of all that is and the creative power to make it manifest. The more we can say thank you to our body, mind and spirit, the more we can express our gratitude to others. When we appreciate others, we experience greater love and respect in our relationships. Imagine that! ■

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