

Gratitude as a Wellness Strategy!

By Dr. Margaret Rea



As we approach the Thanksgiving holiday, it seemed that November would be the appropriate month to consider the practice of gratitude as a wellness strategy. I think we could all agree that receiving thanks feels good. However, research data highlights that giving thanks, practicing gratitude, has enormous impact on our physical and emotional health. One of the key leaders in researching gratitude is here at UC Davis, Robert Emmons. Take a moment to review his summary of some of the central research findings on gratitude and this YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRmfGf5aWE>

- Keeping a gratitude diary for two weeks produced sustained reductions in perceived stress (28 percent) and depression (16 percent) in health-care practitioners.
- Gratitude is related to 23 percent lower levels of stress hormones (cortisol).
- Practicing gratitude led to a 7-percent reduction in biomarkers of inflammation in patients with congestive heart failure.
- Two gratitude activities (counting blessings and gratitude letter writing) reduced the risk of depression in at-risk patients by 41 percent over a six month period.
- Dietary fat intake is reduced by as much as 25 percent when people are keeping a gratitude journal.
- A daily gratitude practice can decelerate

the effects of neurodegeneration (as measured by a 9 percent increase in verbal fluency) that occurs with increasing age.

- Grateful people have 16 percent lower diastolic blood pressure and 10 percent lower systolic blood pressure compared to those less grateful.
- Grateful patients with Stage B asymptomatic heart failure were 16 percent less depressed, 20 percent less fatigued and 18 percent more likely to believe they could control the symptoms of their illness compared to those less grateful.
- Older adults administered the neuropeptide oxytocin showed a 12 percent increase in gratitude compared to those given a placebo
- Writing a letter of gratitude reduced feelings of hopelessness in 88 percent of suicidal inpatients and increased levels of optimism in 94 percent of them.
- Grateful people (including people grateful to God) have between 9-13 percent lower levels of Hemoglobin A1c, a key marker of glucose control that plays a significant role in the diagnosis of diabetes.
- Gratitude is related to a 10 percent improvement in sleep quality in patients with chronic pain, 76 percent of whom had insomnia, and 19 percent lower depression levels.

http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/medicalcenter/features/2015-2016/11/20151125_gratitude.html



Continues on page 2

Wellness Events

Living Fit Forever Classes

http://intranet.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/clinops/resources/living_fit_forever.shtm

Work Life and Wellness Events

<http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/hr/wellness/discounts.html>

UCDMC Yoga

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Gz23GMJbZJDI-wzn9g8NxUnia4lFuVsHah4ola/v7Ow0/edit#heading=h.ey7tt6v51js4>

"Understanding Impostor Syndrome to Help with Success"

Maggie Rea, Ph.D.
Thursday Nov 16th at 12pm
Education Building Room 3207
First 30 Students Receive lunch

Emotionally Preparing for the BSE

Stephen Simonson, Psy.D.
Monday November 28th 12-1
Education Building 3205
First 30 Students Receive lunch

Wellness Rounds

Drop in Group
Thursdays Nov 2, 16, & 30th
12pm-12:50pm
Student Lounge Main Hospital

Gratitude has impact on two topics important to students- sleep and cognition. Dr. Emmons wrote, "Research suggests that grateful people have more positive "pre-sleep cognitions" and less negative pre-sleep cognition. Negative, critical thoughts (e.g., about bad things happening in the world) tend to induce sleeplessness. But grateful people's minds are awash in pleasant thoughts (e.g., about enjoyable things that happened to them during the day), and this promotes sleepiness.... Gratitude promotes innovative thinking, flexibility, openness, curiosity, and love of learning. Grateful people have an interest in learning new information and skills, and they seek opportunities to learn and develop."

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/three_surprising_ways_that_gratitude_works_at_work

As you consider practicing gratitude, note that it means honoring and being thankful for everything from the mundane to the magnificent. You can be thankful for the person who gave you their cart at the grocery store as well as the person who gave you a loving embrace at the end of your difficult day. Consider the many bounties we often take for granted; our access to fresh water, clothing, and food. Paying attention to the things and people around you that you are grateful for can help you to learn to be more grateful. You start seeing more and more factors in your life that instill gratitude within you. In turn, you will feel more positive emotions, decrease your stress level, sleep better, and even have a better immune system. This practice does not mean we ignore our pain or suffering, but it can help us balance our world view.



In my effort to practice what I preach to you, I want to share my gratitude for the many students, staff and faculty that are part of my work here at UC Davis and who support and inspire me every day. Dr. Emmons reminds me to be specific when I give thanks, so for this month, I thank the students who took the time to fill out the Wellness Survey even though they are super busy and in turn have given me great information on how to better meet their wellness needs. And thank you to Woubejig Shiferaw who is always there to edit this newsletter and patiently and gracefully teaches me new editing tricks every month. As a token of my thanks, please take a moment to watch this lovely gratitude video that never fails to inspire and fuel me:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4115qFsdWKQ&t=168s>

05 WAYS TO PRACTICE GRATITUDE



01 Start a gratitude journal



02 Call, visit or send notes to those you are grateful for



03 Anticipate the unexpected blessings that are already on their way



04 Hold a monthly gratitude circle



05 Remember times of hardship and be grateful to have moved on

Wellness Tip: Gratitude Practices

Here are several options for gratitude practices:

- Log three things everyday that you are grateful for
- Write a thank you note to someone: a mentor, your parent, a friend, the person who cleans the building for us
- Keep a gratitude journal
- Call someone and tell them you are grateful- check out this YouTube video:<https://my.happify.com/hd/the-one-phone-call-that-will-make-you-happier-for-weeks/>

"The best way to reap the benefits of gratitude is to notice new things you're grateful for every day. Gratitude journaling works because it slowly changes the way we perceive situations by adjusting what we focus on. While you might always be thankful for your great family, just writing "I'm grateful for my family" week after week doesn't keep your brain on alert for fresh grateful moments. Get specific by writing "Today my husband gave me a shoulder rub when he knew I was really stressed" or "My sister invited me over for dinner so I didn't have to cook after a long day."

And be sure to stretch yourself beyond the great stuff right in front of you. Opening your eyes to more of the world around you can deeply enhance your gratitude practice. Make a game out of noticing new things each day."

<https://my.happify.com/hd/cultivate-an-attitude-of-gratitude/>



Monthly Recipe: Grilled Garden Vegetable Lasagna

Dr. Oliveira, and the Department of Integrative Medicine is launching their 2017 21-Day Food Day Challenge on Monday, October 30th. "The idea of the Challenge is simple. Individuals from around the world come together and commit to following a 100 percent whole food, plant-based diet for 21 days. Whether you are just entertaining the idea of eating plant-based or you have adopted a whole food, plant-based lifestyle for years, there is something in the Challenge for everyone. Throughout this adventure together, you will be supported by like-minded individuals in the community and guided by the resources and expertise of the UC Davis Integrative Medicine team."

Join this annual, complimentary event by clicking to sign up here. <http://ucdintegrativemedicine.com/2017/10/plant-based-meal-plan-cookbook/#gs.elxYWPw>

To get started here is a delicious recipe for Grilled Garden Vegetable Lasagna With Puttanesca Sauce <http://ucdintegrativemedicine.com/recipes/grilled-garden-vegetable-lasagna-with-puttanesca-sauce/#gs.f7PGrMM>

Wellness App: Gratitude Journal & Gratitude 365

Below are two apps that can support a gratitude practice. They both prompt you to log something every day that makes you feel grateful.



Gratitude 365

<http://gratitude365app.com/>

Gratitude Journal ~ the original!

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/gratitude-journal-the-original/id299604556?mt=8>

