

## Gratitude

As we approach the Thanksgiving holiday, it seemed that November would be the appropriate month to consider the practice of gratitude as a strategy to support your well-being. I think we could all agree that receiving thanks feels good. However, researchers in the area of positive psychology such as Martin Seligman and our own UC Davis faculty, Robert Emmons, provide scientific evidence demonstrating that practicing gratitude has enormous impact on our physical and emotional health. <https://positivepsychology.com/benefits-of-gratitude/>

Take a moment to review his summary of some of the central research findings on gratitude and this YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRrnfGf5aWE>

*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 In patients and increased levels of optimism in 94*

By Dr. Margaret Rea

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

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 imperfections our stress, pain or suffering, but it can help us balance our world view.

In my effort to practice what I preach, I want to share my gratitude for the many students, staff and faculty that are part of my work here at UC Davis and whose support, insights and camaradery enrich my every day. 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>

## Wellness Events

### Work Life and Wellness Events

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

### UC Living Fit Forever

[http://intranet.ucdavis.edu/clinops/resources/living\\_fit\\_forever.shtml](http://intranet.ucdavis.edu/clinops/resources/living_fit_forever.shtml)

### The Schwartz Center Rounds

A multidisciplinary forum where clinical caregivers discuss social and emotional issues that arise in caring for patients. Occurs the 4th Tuesday of every month at the Cancer Center Auditorium:

<https://intranet.ucdavis.edu/palliativecare/schwartz.shtml>

### UC Davis Health Farmers Market

Wednesdays 3-7pm  
Ed. Bldg. Outdoor Quad

### Wellness Workshop

Tuesday Nov. 5, 2019  
12-1pm at BIMH 1800  
First 30 students get lunch

## Wellness Tip: Gratitude

In the spirit of it being November and the month of Thanksgiving, the wellness tip is focused on expressing gratitude:

Here is a list of 16 options for expressing gratitude. In addition, you might find the these videos helpful- <https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-meditation-happiness/>

1. *Journal about things, people, or situations for which you are grateful. Consider including negative situations like avoiding an accident, for instance.*
2. *Think about someone for whom you are grateful*
3. *Write a gratitude letter to someone for whom you are thankful. Consider sending it or giving it to them in person.*
4. *Meditate on gratitude (present moment awareness).*
5. *Do the "Count Your Blessings" exercise (at the end of the day, write down three things for which you were grateful)*
6. *Practice saying "thank you" in a real and meaningful way. Be specific. For example, "Thank you for taking the time to read this article and leave a comment. I enjoy reading your contributions because they broaden my understanding of this subject."*
7. *Write thank you notes. Some might say this is a lost art. Challenge yourself to write one hand-written note every week for one month.*
8. *If religious, pray about your gratitude or use specific prayers of gratitude. Interfaith Worker Justice offers Muslim, Jewish, and*
9. *Recall a negative event. Doing this helps you appreciate your current situation.*
10. *Be mindful of your five senses. How does each enhance your life?*
11. *Create visual reminders to practice gratitude. Sticky notes, notifications, and people are great for this.*
12. *Focus on the good that others have done on your behalf.*
13. *Actions lead to gratitude. Smile, say thank you, and write gratitude letters.*
14. *Be grateful gazer. Be on the lookout for opportunities to feel grateful.*
15. *Give something up. We tend to adapt to newness; sometimes it's a good idea to give something up so that we can increase our appreciation of it.*
16. *Think about what your life would be like if a specific positive event wouldn't have happened. Write all the decisions and events that would have been different in your life. For instance, what if you didn't meet your spouse? What if you didn't get the dream job you have now? What if you hadn't stopped a particular bad habit?*

*Christian examples. Secular Seasons has several graces and invocations. You also can find a collection of secular gratitude approaches on Be. Orlando Humanist Fellowship.*

### The Act of Giving: Donate

This month, in place of a recipe, and in honor of Thanksgiving, please consider donating to a food bank of your choice to be sure others do not go without food during this holiday season. Options for giving include:

**The Food Pantry** to benefit anyone with a need in the UC Davis Health community.

**The Sacramento Food pantry** <https://support.sacramentofoodbank.org/give/126385/#/donation/checkout>

**River City Food Bank** <https://rivercityfoodbank.org/>

**Central Downton Food Bank** <http://cdfb.org/>

**Yolo Food Bank** <https://yolofoodbank.org/>

Thank  
You

### Wellness App: Grateful



"With its simple interface and daily prompts, Grateful is designed to make reflection and giving thanks both a joyful and easy process. Daunted by a blank page? Not quite sure where to start? Grateful will greet you with one question, such as. 'What made you smile today?' or 'What made today a good day?'. All you have to do is answer. It can be a simple word. Or a simple paragraph. Grateful allows for both. You can also add a photo to support your thoughts....Grateful's simple journal feed lets you browse your entries by TIME or by PROMPT. Want to see all the things that made you smile this year? Jump to those entries in your timeline. Want to see what your state of mind was last January? Jump to that month in your timeline."

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/grateful-a-gratitude-journal/id1197512462>