

Gratitude Practice for Nurses

TOOLKIT FOR WELL-BEING

Overview

The American Nurses Foundation (Foundation) and the Greater Good Science Center (GGSC) at the University of California, Berkeley, are pleased to present this **Gratitude Practice for Nurses Toolkit**, designed to support nurses' social and emotional well-being. This toolkit is based on decades of scientific research revealing the many benefits of gratitude, as well as best practices from practitioners to support the cultivation of gratitude. We hope that you will find the tools and insights contained within this toolkit to be of support to you and your nursing teams.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Why Gratitude Matters for Nurses | slide deck

The Benefits of Gratitude | infographic

Cultivating the Practice of Gratitude in Nursing

Action #1 | Gratitude 123

Action #2 | Gratitude Letter

Action #3 | Gratitude Journal

Action #4 | Savoring Walk

Action #5 | Caregiving with Intention

Action #6 | Gratitude Huddle

Action #7 | Gratitude Wall

Action #8 | Heart and Soul of the Month

Take the Gratitude Challenge

The Science of Gratitude | resource list

Acknowledgments

The **Gratitude Practice for Nurses Toolkit** has been developed through collaboration between the American Nurses Foundation and the Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley.

The [American Nurses Foundation](#) is the philanthropic arm of the American Nurses Association, the premier organization representing the interests of the nation's 4 million registered nurses. The Foundation seeks to achieve a healthy world through the power of nursing by elevating the profession of nursing globally, engaging all nurses to ensure professional success, and evolving the practice of nursing to transform health and health care.

The [Greater Good Science Center](#) at the University of California, Berkeley, studies the psychology, sociology, and neuroscience of well-being, and teaches skills that foster a thriving, resilient, and compassionate society. The GGSC is unique in its commitment to both science and practice by sponsoring groundbreaking scientific research into social and emotional well-being while helping people apply this research to their personal and professional lives.

We are especially grateful for the support of the Gratitude Practice for Nurses Advisory Group whose members include nurses and nurse managers from a variety of health care contexts and organizations around the country. The advisory group's insights and direct experience in the nursing field were immensely helpful to the design and development of the Gratitude Practice for Nurses initiative.

Marian Altman, PhD, RN, CNS-BC, CCRN-K
Clinical Practice Specialist
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses

Perry Gee, PhD, RN
Nurse Scientist
Intermountain Healthcare

Umma Amina, BSN, RN
High-Risk Labor & Delivery
Kaiser Permanente

Mike Hastings, MSN, RN, CEN
2020 President
Emergency Nurses Association

Frances Akubuilu, DNP, RN, AHN-BC
Nurse Director
GFK Home Health Care

Sherry Kassenbrock, BSN, RN, PHN
Credentialed School Nurse
Oakland Unified School District

Mendy Blair, DNP, RN-BC, NE-BC, CENP
Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer
Baptist Health Richmond

Lesly Kelly, PhD, RN, FAAN
Nurse Scientist
CommonSpirit Health

Laurie Combe, MN, RN, NCSN
2019-2021 President
National Association of School Nurses

Marla J. Weston, PHD, RN, FAAN
CEO
Weston Consulting LLC

Why Gratitude Matters for Nurses

Part of the **Gratitude Practice for Nurses Toolkit**

What is Gratitude?

A recognition that...

- There is goodness in our lives, gifts or benefits that we have received (and might often take for granted).
- This goodness often stems from the actions or contributions of another person. When we're grateful, we recognize the intention and effort that went into those actions on our behalf, and the benefits they gave us.

(Emmons, 2003 & 2007)



Why Gratitude Matters?

Over the past three decades, studies have consistently identified strong benefits of gratitude for our minds, bodies, and relationships.



Grateful people:

- Report higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction.
- Are more resilient to stress.
- Get along better with others.
- Are less depressed.
- Achieve more.
- Are more helpful and generous.

Why Gratitude Matters

Gratitude motivates people to make positive changes in their lives and in the world around them through feelings of:

- **CONNECTEDNESS:** Gratitude rewards us with a strong network of support and encouragement, leading us to feel we can tackle big challenges.
- **ELEVATION:** Gratitude inspires and motivates us to become healthier & more generous people and better & more productive workers.
- **HUMILITY:** Expressing gratitude highlights how other people have contributed to the goodness and successes in our lives.
- **GENEROSITY:** Gratitude encourages us to recognize and reciprocate the good others have given us, reinforcing the warm-glow pleasures of kindness.

Why Gratitude: Health Benefits

Gratitude Improves:

- Sleep
- Tendency to exercise
- Cardiovascular health
- Adherence to medication
- Mood, optimism, hope



Gratitude Reduces:

- Substance abuse
- Fat intake
- Cortisol
- Blood pressure
- Suicidal thoughts
- Inflammation
- Perceived stress and depression in health care providers

Why Gratitude: Health Benefits

People receiving counseling (for depression/anxiety) were also asked to:

- Group 1: Write a letter of gratitude to another person weekly for 3 weeks
- Group 2: Write about their deepest thoughts and feelings about stressful experiences
- Group 3: Didn't receive instructions for a writing activity.

RESULTS:

- Group 1 reported significantly better mental health than the other groups 1 month after the writing exercise ended, then again 3 months later.

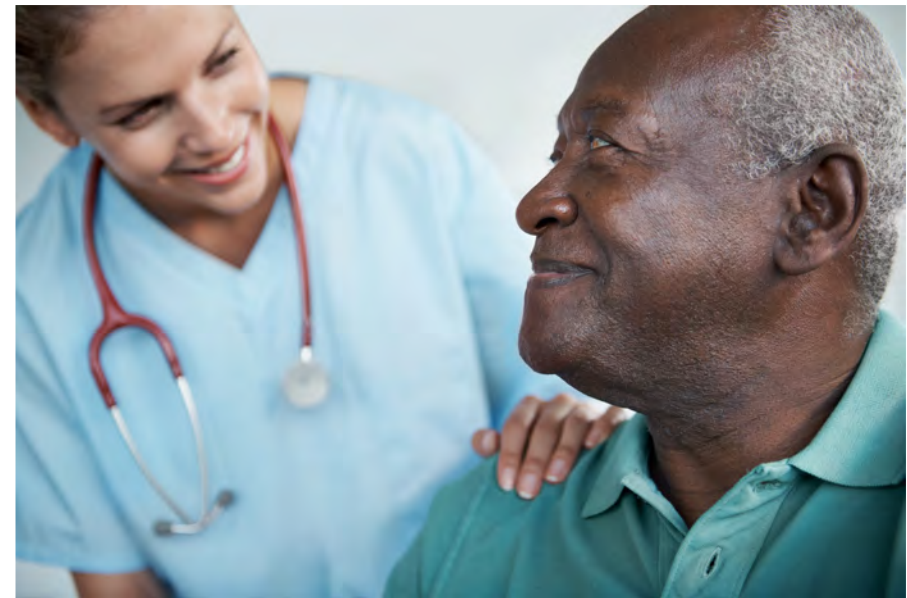
Study by Wong, Owen, Gabana & Gilman (2015)

Why Gratitude: Health Benefits

Patients with Stage B heart failure were monitored over 2 months. 50% of them kept a daily gratitude journal.

RESULTS:

- After the 2 months, those who kept gratitude journals showed less inflammation and a lower risk of future heart failure than the other study participants did.
- They also showed healthier resting heart rates while journaling in the lab.



Study by Redwine et. al. (2016)

Why Gratitude: Health Benefits

Patients admitted to a psychiatric unit were given 1 of 9 positive psychological exercises to do over 8 weeks, including writing a gratitude letter and keeping a gratitude journal.

RESULTS:

- These patients reported less anxiety and depression than those who received standard treatments.
- Patients reported the greatest benefit from the gratitude exercises, especially the gratitude letter.



Study by Huffman et al (2014)

Why Gratitude: Health Benefits

Health care providers twice weekly wrote down things for which they were grateful.

RESULTS:

- Reductions in perceived stress (28%) and depression (16%) in health care practitioners
- “Such positive effects can also lead to an improvement in both productivity and quality of patient services.”

Study by Cheng, Tsui & Lam (2015)



Gratitude in the Workplace: Challenges

Workplace cultures that lack embedded gratitude practices can become rife with struggles:

- siloed
- overly competitive
- transactional
- distracted
- lacking civility



Gratitude in the Workplace: Opportunities

A survey of gratitude found:

- People are less likely to express thanks at work than anyplace else.
- 60% NEVER or very rarely thanked anyone at work.
- Only 10% expressed gratitude at work on a given day.
- 35% worried that expressing gratitude would lead co-workers to take advantage of them.



Gratitude in the Workplace: Benefits

Yet research also shows:

- A “thank you” from a supervisor gives people a strong sense of self-worth, which leads to increases in motivation and productivity; gratitude recipients also become more trusting and more helpful.
- When employees feel gratitude, they seem more committed to their organization and their colleagues.
- Practicing gratitude boosts employee well-being and reduces sick days.
- Saying “thanks” at work makes people feel happier and hearing “thanks” makes them happier and more productive (by 50%!).
- Only 18% felt expressing gratitude made bosses seem weak; 93% said grateful bosses were more likely to succeed.
- According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the number one reason why people leave their jobs is because they don’t feel appreciated.

Building a Culture of Gratitude

LESSONS LEARNED FROM HEALTH CARE PARTNERS

Building a Culture of Gratitude

HARDWIRING GRATITUDE



Efforts to foster gratitude are most effective when they are built into organizational culture, supporting individual practice while working toward systemic change.

Building a Culture of Gratitude

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION



Expressions of gratitude and gratitude programs as a whole should not be forced on employees. Rather, gratitude needs to be fostered in a way that respects staff time.

Building a Culture of Gratitude

MAINTAINING AUTHENTICITY



Gratitude should be a practice that is encouraged and allowed to grow organically.

Building a Culture of Gratitude

MAKING GRATITUDE A RECURRING ACTIVITY



Gratitude will thrive when it's not just done as part of discrete programs or at certain times of the year but is connected to other, recurring efforts to foster a positive, caring culture.

Building a Culture of Gratitude

DEVELOPING AN ARRAY OF TOOLS FOR WELL-BEING & RESILIENCE



Gratitude is one of many paths to wellness. Mindfulness techniques, training caregivers in the art of compassion, and engaging in campaigns to encourage kindness are all practices that, together with gratitude, offer an array of tools that staff can use.

Explore the practices found in the Gratitude Practice for Nurses Toolkit for Well-Being.

Want to Practice More Gratitude?

Check out these other websites:

- gratitudefornurses.org
- nursingworld.org/thewellbeinginitiative
- healthynursehealthynation.org
- ggia.berkeley.edu



Gratitude Journal

Count your blessings and enjoy better health and happiness.

Casual



Gratitude Letter

Write a letter expressing thanks, and deliver it in person.

Moderate



Savoring Walk

How a stroll outside can help build lasting happiness.

Moderate



Want to Practice More Gratitude?

TRY THIS!

Register at:

- Thnx4.org

How it works:

- Register for a 21-Day Thnx4Nurses Gratitude Challenge on Thnx4.org.
- Create your account and join an upcoming Thnx4Nurses group challenge.
- Two days before the start date of your Challenge, you'll get a friendly reminder from Thnx4.
- Once your Thnx4Nurses Gratitude Challenge begins, you'll get prompts every other day inviting you to journal your experiences and expressions of gratitude.
- Track your activity and see how keeping a gratitude journal is associated with levels of happiness, social connection, and resilience to stress.



Thank You!

The BENEFITS of GRATITUDE

Research has found that gratitude is good for our bodies, our minds, and our relationships.



Discover more at
GRATITUDEFORNURSES.ORG

Cultivating the Practice of Gratitude in Nursing

Action #1 Gratitude 123 | individual action

TIME REQUIRED:

15 minutes

HOW TO DO IT:

We know from seminal studies of gratitude that it involves a) acknowledging the good things—or “gifts”—we enjoy in our lives due to another person’s efforts, and b) appreciating the positive impact of these gifts. Studies also suggest that when people are thanked for something they did, they like hearing how their actions demonstrate an admirable trait or quality they possess; plus, acknowledging the effort behind their actions also makes you feel better about yourself: Someone cared enough about you to deliberately invest their energy in helping you.

This practice involves saying a “thank you” to someone else with three important components:

- 1) Describing what that other person did for you.
- 2) Acknowledging the effort their actions required and the admirable quality their efforts exemplify.
- 3) Explaining how their actions helped or benefitted you.

For example: Thank you for...

- 1) helping me persuade that patient to schedule their vaccination.
- 2) I know you have other work to do—but you are the kind of person who always steps up and contributes when you see a need.
- 3) I felt like my work had greater impact today because you helped me get through to that patient. I really appreciate you making that possible.

Consider using this practice in conjunction with the Gratitude Huddle (Action #6 in this Toolkit) when expressing gratitude to other individuals on your team.

SOURCE:

This practice draws on the work of Sara Algoe, Ph.D., of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Giacomo Bono, Ph.D., of California State University, Dominguez Hills, and Jeffrey Froh, Psy.D., of Hofstra University.

Cultivating the Practice of Gratitude in Nursing

Action #2 Gratitude Letter | individual action

TIME REQUIRED:

At least 15 minutes for writing the letter and at least 30 minutes to share it.

HOW TO DO IT:

Call to mind someone who did something for you for which you are extremely grateful but to whom you never expressed your deep gratitude. This could be a relative, friend, teacher, or colleague. Try to pick someone who is still alive and could meet you face-to-face in the next week. It may be most helpful to select a person or act you haven't thought about for a while—something that isn't always on your mind. If physical distance keeps you from making a visit, you may choose to arrange a phone or video chat.

Now, write a letter to one of these people, guided by the following steps:

- 1) Write as though you are addressing this person directly (“Dear _____”)
- 2) Don't worry about perfect grammar or spelling.
- 3) Describe in specific terms what this person did, why you are grateful to this person, and how this person's behavior affected your life. Try to be as concrete as possible.
- 4) Describe what you are doing in your life now and how you often remember his or her efforts.
- 5) Try to keep your letter to roughly one page (~300 words).

Next, you should try, if at all possible, to deliver your letter in person, following these steps:

- 1) Plan a visit with the recipient. Let that person know you'd like to see them and have something special to share, but don't reveal the exact purpose of the meeting.
- 2) When you meet, let the person know that you are grateful to them and would like to read a letter expressing your gratitude; ask that they refrain from interrupting until you're done.
- 3) Take your time reading the letter. While you read, pay attention to their reaction and yours.
- 4) After you finish reading, be receptive to their reaction and discuss your feelings together.
- 5) Remember to give the letter to the person when you leave.

SOURCE:

Appears on the Greater Good Science Center website [Greater Good in Action](#).

This practice has been tested by many researchers, including Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D., of the University of California, Riverside; Kristin Layous, Ph.D., of California State University, East Bay; and Martin Seligman, Ph.D., of the University of Pennsylvania.

Cultivating the Practice of Gratitude in Nursing

Action #3 Gratitude Journal | individual action

TIME REQUIRED:

15 minutes per day, at least twice per week for two weeks.

HOW TO DO IT:

There's no wrong way to keep a gratitude journal, but here are some general guidelines.

Write down up to five things for which you feel grateful. The physical record is important—don't just do this exercise in your head. The things you list can be relatively small in importance (“The tasty sandwich I had for lunch today.”) or relatively large (“My sister gave birth to a healthy baby boy.”). The goal of the exercise is to remember a good event, experience, person, or thing in your life, then enjoy the good emotions that come with it. As you write, here are nine important tips:

- 1) **Be as specific as possible—specificity is key to fostering gratitude.** “I’m grateful that my co-workers brought me soup when I was sick on Tuesday” will be more effective than “I’m grateful for my co-workers.”
- 2) **Go for depth over breadth.** Elaborating in detail about a particular person or thing for which you’re grateful carries more benefits than a superficial list of many things.
- 3) **Get personal.** Focusing on people to whom you are grateful has more of an impact than focusing on things for which you are grateful.
- 4) **Try subtraction, not just addition.** Consider what your life would be like without certain people or things, rather than just tallying up all the good stuff. Be grateful for the negative outcomes you avoided, escaped, prevented, or turned into something positive—try not to take that good fortune for granted.
- 5) **See good things as “gifts.”** Thinking of the good things in your life as gifts guards against taking them for granted. Try to relish and savor the gifts you’ve received.
- 6) **Savor surprises.** Try to record events that were unexpected or surprising, as these tend to elicit stronger levels of gratitude.
- 7) **Revise if you repeat.** Writing about some of the same people and things is OK, but zero in on a different aspect in detail.
- 8) **Write regularly.** Keep your gratitude journal open along with a pen in a conspicuous space as a reminder. Whether you write every other day or once a week, commit to a regular time to journal, then honor that commitment. But...
- 9) **Don’t overdo it.** Evidence suggests writing occasionally (1-3 times per week) is more beneficial than daily journaling. That might be because we adapt to positive events and can soon become numb to them—that’s why it helps to savor surprises.

SOURCE:

Appears on the Greater Good Science Center website [Greater Good in Action](#).

Practice has been tested by researchers including Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D., of the University of California, Riverside, and Robert Emmons, Ph.D., of the University of California, Davis.

Cultivating the Practice of Gratitude in Nursing

Action #4 Savoring Walk | individual action

TIME REQUIRED:

20 minutes daily for at least one week.

HOW TO DO IT:

Set aside 20 minutes to take a walk outside by yourself every day for a week. You might explore ways to do this on your way to/from work, after work, or on a lunch break. Try to stick to this schedule unless the weather is extremely bad. You can still do this exercise in a light rain, provided you have a decent umbrella and rain jacket.

As you walk, try to notice as many positive things around you as you can. These can be sights, sounds, smells, or other sensations. For example, you could focus on the breathtaking height of a tree you never really noticed before, the intricate architecture of a building on your block, the dance of sunshine off a window or puddle, the smell of grass or flowers, or the way other people look out for each other as they navigate crowded streets.

As you notice each of these positive things, acknowledge each one in your mind—don't just let them slip past you. Pause for a moment as you hear or see each thing and make sure it registers with your conscious awareness, really hearing the intricacies of each sound and object. Try to identify what makes that thing pleasurable to you. Let the sensations around you conjure up feelings of gratitude for the gift of life and living that they represent. Explore ways you can respond in gratitude, perhaps with a small or a silent return of positive thought directed at whom and what you see.

Try to walk a different route each day so you don't become too accustomed to any of these things and start to take them for granted.

SOURCE:

Appears on the Greater Good Science Center website [Greater Good in Action](#).

Practice originally created by Fred Bryant, Ph.D., of Loyola University Chicago.

Cultivating the Practice of Gratitude in Nursing

Action #5 Caregiving with Intention | individual action

TIME REQUIRED:

3 minutes before and after each encounter with a person in your care.

HOW TO DO IT:

The demands placed on caregivers mean we are rushing from person to person to tend to their needs, often without being fully present to the experience. As a result, we might miss opportunities to connect with them and reflect on the gift of caregiving. With just a momentary pause before an encounter, you can change the experience you are about to have, both for yourself and the person for whom you are providing care.

- 1) Slow down before each encounter, take a few deep breaths, and allow yourself the presence of mind to truly see and be with a patient's struggles.
- 2) As you breathe, you might consider silently repeating a simple phrase or affirmation to ground yourself, such as "I am grateful to play a role in caring for this person" or "May I be present and empathize with this person's experience."
- 3) Greet them with a soft smile. With intentionality, thank them for allowing you to be involved in their lives at this important time. Allow time for that exchange of gratitude to be felt.
- 4) Take in the rush of emotion and allow it to give you strength and compassion to continue your day and go about this important work. Allow the experience to remind you of the beauty of human interaction, the shared struggles and joys.
- 5) Give thanks for the occupation of healing of which you have the honor of being part.

SOURCE:

Practice inspired by Leif Haas, M.D., a family medicine physician and hospitalist in Oakland, California. Read [his article](#) elaborating on these ideas on *Greater Good* magazine.

Cultivating the Practice of Gratitude in Nursing

Action #6 Gratitude Huddle | organizational action

TIME REQUIRED:

5 to 15 minutes on each shift, daily or twice daily, in order to have full staff participation.

HOW TO DO IT:

A gratitude huddle provides a great opportunity for colleagues to gather and share things for which they are grateful in a group setting. When done in a work environment, it can help build a sense of community and team connection that carries throughout the workday.

- 1) Set aside time for this activity during a staff meeting or during routine safety meetings when nurses begin or end their shift and gather as a group.
- 2) One at a time, as people feel so moved (“popcorn style” rather than going around in a circle), encourage them to say out loud one thing they are grateful for at work or one thing they appreciate about working with a colleague. Examples could include something that went well during their shift for which they are grateful, something that a colleague did that helped them, or something that made them feel good about being a nurse. It’s helpful to keep the gratitude focused on work, to center gratitude in the work environment.
- 3) When someone is thanked by a colleague, their response can be a simple, “You’re welcome.”
- 4) When silence seems to indicate people are finished, say, “We’ll wait a couple more moments to see if there are any more sharers before we close the thank you circle for today.” Often someone is getting up the courage to speak and may come forward at this time. Note that it isn’t necessary everyone participate each time you have a Gratitude Huddle or that everyone receive acknowledgement every time.
- 5) Close the practice by mentioning that we seldom get to know about these everyday moments of goodness or kindness because of the busyness of our work, but they are going on around us all the time. Acknowledging them reminds us to make time and offer each other gratitude.
- 6) With repeated practice of this huddle, encourage staff to write down gratitude they experienced throughout the day so they can share it in a future huddle or with the oncoming shift as a reflection of good things from that day.

Consider using this practice in conjunction with Gratitude 123 (Action #1 in this Toolkit). When members of the huddle want to say “thank you” to someone else, invite them to: 1) describe what that other person did for them, 2) acknowledge the effort that was demonstrated, and 3) explain how the other person’s actions helped or benefitted them.

SOURCE:

Practice inspired by Marian Altman, PhD, RN, CNS-BC, CCRN-K, a clinical practice specialist with the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses; and Kelly Carter, MS, RN, NE-BC, a nursing director serving in the Surgery-Rehab Division of Virginia Commonwealth University Health. Also draws on the [Gratitude Circle for Staff Members](#) practice that is based on the work of Leading Together and is featured on the Greater Good in Education platform.

Cultivating the Practice of Gratitude in Nursing

Action #7 Gratitude Wall | organizational action

TIME REQUIRED:

Up to 1 hour to create; 3 minutes to give/receive each expression of gratitude.

HOW TO DO IT:

Create a space where colleagues can acknowledge the positive contributions, work-related achievements, and meaningful efforts of others. Hang a large bulletin board or large blank paper in a conspicuous location, along with post-it notes (or notepaper with thumbtacks) and markers nearby. Get creative—you could do a paper bulletin tree with leaf-shaped post-its, a bucket or well with water drop-shaped post-its to fill the well, or a sky backdrop with star-shaped post-its. Use whatever shapes and designs speak to your team and make the space attractive. Place a little instruction sheet nearby.

Invite colleagues to add positive notes and expressions of gratitude onto the bulletin board. In your instructions, you could invite people to pause and take a moment to reflect on a kind or selfless act they witnessed or experienced. You might consider inviting patients and visitors to your health care space to participate in the exchange, giving them the opportunity to express notes of gratitude for the care they received.

As the notes fill up the bulletin board, find opportunities during shift breaks and workday meetings to read a few of the notes out loud or in small groups, or invite teams to silently reflect on the expressions.

SOURCE:

See “The Tribute Wall” in *Connect: Create a Culture of Appreciation in Your Organization*, copyright 2013 by Stephanie Pollack. Explore more ways to cultivate gratitude at Pollack’s [Culture of Appreciation website](#).

Also inspired by practices at Kaiser Permanente and other organizations.

Cultivating the Practice of Gratitude in Nursing

Action #8 Heart and Soul of the Month | organizational action

TIME REQUIRED:

Up to 1 hour to create; 15 minutes to nominate, make the award, and acknowledge

HOW TO DO IT:

Give an inspirational individual in your department a “Heart and Soul” award because she or he naturally spreads positivity and appreciation throughout your organization.

Once a month, invite everyone to reflect on and nominate someone who they believe encompasses the giving spirit of the organization or department. Be sure to consider various ways that people with different personalities might express the giving spirit (e.g., some may express themselves more quietly than others or do things “behind the scenes” that contribute to the positivity of the work environment. Don’t forget to recognize them, too, and spread the recognition around to different individuals.)

Designate this individual as the “Heart and Soul” and feature that individual in some special way—for instance, on a visible wall or bulletin board posting, in a newsletter, on your organization’s intranet, or in a department-wide email.

On the first workday of the month, rally your department or team together in shouting out that month’s Heart and Soul awardee. Make sure to express the special qualities that make this person wonderful. Offer a verbal or written note of gratitude on behalf of the department or organization for the many ways this person exemplifies goodness and generosity. Consider holding a small Heart and Soul reception to bring the team together to honor the awardee.

SOURCE:

See “Heart and Soul of the Month” from *Connect: Create a Culture of Appreciation in Your Organization*, copyright 2013 by Stephanie Pollack. Explore more ways to cultivate gratitude at Pollack’s [Culture of Appreciation website](#).

Take the Gratitude Challenge

EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF KEEPING A GRATITUDE JOURNAL, TOGETHER

We invite you and your colleagues to join a **Thnx4Nurses Gratitude Challenge** just for nurses on Thnx4.org!

Thnx4.org is an online, sharable journaling platform that helps you reflect upon and “say Thnx” for the goodness in your life.

Every other day, Thnx4.org will prompt you to post what you felt grateful for or about, helping you notice and savor positive moments. You can keep your posts private, share them with the nursing community, or make them public to inspire widespread warmth and goodwill.



HOW IT WORKS

- The Gratitude Practice for Nurses campaign offers two opportunities to join with other nurses in a 21-day Thnx4Nurses Gratitude Challenge on Thnx4.org. The first challenge begins on June 10, 2021. The second challenge begins on November 4, 2021.
- Start by creating your account on Thnx4.org and joining the upcoming Thnx4Nurses group challenge.
- Two days before the start date of your Thnx4Nurses Gratitude Challenge, you'll get a friendly reminder from Thnx4.
- Once your Thnx4Nurses Gratitude Challenge begins, you'll get prompts every other day inviting you to journal your experiences and expressions of gratitude.
- Throughout the 21 days, you can track your activity and see how keeping a gratitude journal is associated with levels of happiness, social connection, and resilience to stress.

The Science of Gratitude

Resource List

The following is a listing of resources—research studies, articles, multimedia content, and more—that you can use to broaden your understanding of the science of gratitude and the many benefits gratitude can provide, both personally and in the workplace.

RELEVANT STUDIES

Gratitude & Mental Health

Does gratitude writing improve the mental health of psychotherapy clients? Wong, Y.J., Owen, J., Gabana, N.T., Brown, J.W., Mcinnis, S., Toth, P., & Gilman, L. (2016). [Does gratitude writing improve the mental health of psychotherapy clients? Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial.](#) *Psychotherapy Research*, May 3, 1-11.

A study of adults seeking university-based psychotherapy services found that those who wrote letters expressing gratitude to others during a 12-week period reported significantly better mental health than did others in the study.

Improving mental health in health care practitioners

Cheng, S.T., Tsui, P.K., & Lam, J.H. (2015). [Improving Mental Health in Health Care Practitioners: Randomized Controlled Trial of a Gratitude Intervention.](#) *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 83(1), 177-186.

This study looked at chronic occupational stress in health care practitioners; results suggest that directing practitioners' attention to events at work for which they are grateful reduces stress and depressive symptoms.

Feasibility and utility of positive psychology exercises for suicidal inpatients

Huffman, J.C., DuBois, C.M., Healy, B.C., Boehm, J.K., Kashdan, T.B., Celano, C.M., Denninger, J.W., Lyubomirsky, S. (2014). [Feasibility and utility of positive psychology exercises for suicidal inpatients.](#) *General Hospital Psychiatry*, 36(1), 88-94.

This study assessed the feasibility and acceptability of nine “positive psychology” exercises delivered to patients hospitalized for suicidal thoughts or behaviors, exploring the relative impact of the exercises. It found that the exercises were associated with short-term improvements in clinically relevant outcomes, with two exercises—writing a gratitude letter and counting blessings—delivering the greatest benefit.

Gratitude and Well-Being

Wood, A. M., Froh, J.J., & Geraghty, A.W. (2010). [Gratitude and Well-Being: A Review and Theoretical Integration](#). *Clinical Psychology Review*, 30(7), 890-905.

Presents a new model of gratitude incorporating both gratitude that arises following help from others and habitual appreciations of the positive aspects of life.

How to Increase and Sustain Positive Emotion

Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006). [How to Increase and Sustain Positive Emotion: The Effects of Expressing Gratitude and Visualizing Best Possible Selves](#). *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1(2), 73-82.

Regularly practicing counting one's blessings and visualizing one's best possible self are shown to raise and maintain positive mood.

Gratitude and Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being in Vietnam War Veterans

Kashdan, T.B., Uswatte, G., & Julian, T. (2006). [Gratitude and Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being in Vietnam War Veterans](#). *Behavior Research and Therapy*, 44(2), 177-199.

This study investigated the extent to which dispositions of gratitude can predict feelings of well-being in veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It found that dispositional gratitude predicted greater daily positive affect, motivation, and self-esteem to counter the effects of PTSD.

Positive Psychology Progress

Seligman, M.E., Steen, T.A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). [Positive Psychology Progress: Empirical Validation of Interventions](#). *American Psychologist*, 60(5), 410-21.

The authors discuss recent developments in the field of positive psychology, including the classification of character strengths and virtues. In a study examining five purported happiness interventions, the authors found that three of the interventions increased happiness and decreased depressive symptoms, illustrating that positive interventions can supplement traditional interventions to relieve suffering.

Counting Blessings Versus Burdens

Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). [Counting Blessings Versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life](#). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(2), 377-389.

Examines the effect of a grateful outlook on one's well-being through three different studies involving the use of participants recording their moods and experiences with gratitude.

The Grateful Disposition

McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J-A. (2002). [The Grateful Disposition: A Conceptual and Empirical Topography](#). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(1), 112-127.

Four studies examine the correlates of the disposition toward gratitude, finding that people who see themselves—and are seen by others—as having a grateful disposition also report more well-being, prosocial behaviors, and spirituality.

Gratitude & Physical Health

Gratitude Journaling Intervention in Patients With Stage B Heart Failure

Redwine, L.S., Henry, B.L., Pung, M.A., Wilson, K., Chinh, K., Jain, S., Rutledge, T., Greenberg, B., Maisel, A., Mills, P.J. (2016). [Pilot Randomized Study of a Gratitude Journaling Intervention on Heart Rate Variability and Inflammatory Biomarkers in Patients With Stage B Heart Failure](#). *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 78(6), 667-76.

Researchers conducted a pilot study among Stage B heart failure patients and found that gratitude journaling improved biomarkers related to their prognosis.

The Role of Gratitude in Spiritual Well-Being

Mills, P.J., Redwine, L., Wilson, K., Pung, M.A., Chinh, K., Greenberg, B.H., Lunde, O., Maisel, A., Raisinghani, A. (2015). [The Role of Gratitude in Spiritual Well-Being in Asymptomatic Heart Failure Patients](#). *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, 2(1), 5-17.

This study examined the role of gratitude in heart failure patients; results suggest gratitude is a mechanism through which spirituality may exert beneficial effects on physical and mental health.

Design and baseline data from the Gratitude Research in Acute Coronary Events (GRACE) study

Huffman, J.C., Beale, E.E., Beach, S.R., Celano, C.M., Belcher, A.M., Moore, S.V., Suarez, L. Gandhi, P.U., Motiwala, S.R., Gaggin, H., & Januzzi, J.L. (2015). [Design and Baseline Data from the Gratitude Research in Acute Coronary Events \(GRACE\) Study](#). *Contemporary Clinical Trials*, 44, 11-19.

The study examined the association between optimism/gratitude at two weeks after an acute coronary event (ACE) and subsequent clinical outcomes. Findings indicate that more grateful people had healthier hearts than their less-grateful counterparts.

Gratitude Influences Sleep through the Mechanism of Pre-Sleep Cognitions

Wood, A. M., Joseph, S., Lloyd, J., & Atkins, S. (2009). [Gratitude Influences Sleep through the Mechanism of Pre-Sleep Cognitions](#). *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 66(1), 43–48.

This study finds that gratitude predicts greater subjective sleep quality and sleep duration, and less sleep latency and daytime dysfunction due to lack of sleep.

Gratitude and Health

Jans-Beken, L., Jacobs, N., Janssens, M., Peeters, S., Reijnders, J., Lechner, L., & Lataster, J. (2019). [Gratitude and health: An updated review](#). *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 15(6), 743-782.

This paper provides a detailed overview of the research on the health benefits of gratitude, zeroing in on studies suggesting that gratitude might actually cause improvements to mental and physical health.

Gratitude & Prosocial Behavior

An Adaptation for Altruism?

McCullough, M. E., Kimeldorf, M. B., & Cohen, A. D. (2008). [An Adaptation for Altruism? The Social Causes, Social Effects, and Social Evolution of Gratitude](#). *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17(4), 281-285.

Provides a look at what gratitude is, where it comes from both socially and evolutionarily, and its effects on others.

Gratitude and Prosocial Behavior

Bartlett, M.Y., & DeSteno, D. (2006). [Gratitude and Prosocial Behavior: Helping When It Costs You](#). *Psychological Science*, 17(4), 319-325.

Finds that feeling gratitude produces kind and helpful behavior, even when that behavior is costly to the individual actor.

ARTICLES, VIDEOS, QUIZZES, AND PODCAST EPISODES

Articles

Gratitude Can Calm Our Urge to Compete with Others

By Jill Suttie | May 11, 2020

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

The Ripple Effects of a Thank You

By Jill Suttie | December 20, 2019

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

Five Ways to Protect Your Well-Being as a Health Care Professional

By Eve Ekman | December 3, 2019

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

Four Ways Gratitude Helps You with Difficult Feelings

By Elizabeth Hopper | November 19, 2019

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

The Health and Wellness Benefits of Gratitude

By Linda Roszak Burton | September 17, 2019

<https://engage.healthnursehealthnation.org/blogs/8/3378>

Three Good Things: Build Resilience and Improve Well-Being

By Paige Roberts, MBA, RN, PCCN | December 31, 2018

<https://www.myamericannurse.com/three-good-things-build-resilience-and-improve-well-being/>

Gratitude Is a Survival Skill

By Shawn Taylor | June 12, 2018

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

Can Gratitude Help Couples Through Hard Times?

By Jill Suttie | May 24, 2018

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

How One Gratitude Researcher Practices Thankfulness

By Kira M. Newman | May 18, 2018

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

Why Is Gratitude So Hard for Some People?

By Summer Allen | May 10, 2018

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

Is Gratitude Good for Your Health?

By Summer Allen | March 5, 2018

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

How to Say “Thank You” to Your Partner

By Sara Algoe | February 27, 2018

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

Can Gratitude Help You Recover from a Heart Attack?

By Jeff Huffman | January 29, 2018

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can_gratitude_help_you_recover_from_a_heart_attack1

Five Ways to Make the Most of Your Gratitude

By Alex Springer | January 22, 2018

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

How Gratitude Can Reduce Burnout in Health Care

By Catherine Brozena | January 11, 2018

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

What Happens When Older Adults Take a Class on Gratitude?

By Sara Orem | January 4, 2018

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

Why a Grateful Brain Is a Giving One

By Christina Karns | December 19, 2017

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

How to Overcome the Biggest Obstacle to Gratitude

By Tom Gilovich | December 12, 2017

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

How Gratitude Helps Your Friendships Grow

By Eric Pedersen and Debra Lieberman | December 6, 2017

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

Can Gratitude Be Good for Your Heart?

By Paul J. Mills and Laura Redwine | October 25, 2017

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

How Gratitude Can Transform Your Workplace

By Kira M. Newman | September 6, 2017

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

Why Health Professionals Should Cultivate Gratitude

By Leif Haas | July 26, 2017

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

How Gratitude Changes You and Your Brain

By Joel Wong and Joshua Brown | June 6, 2017

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

How Gratitude Motivates Us to Become Better People

By Christina N. Armenta and Sonja Lyubomirsky | May 23, 2017

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

Can Giving Thanks Help Us Heal from Trauma?

By Jeremy Adam Smith | November 26, 2014

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

Six Habits of Highly Grateful People

By Jeremy Adam Smith | November 20, 2013

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/six_habits_of_highly_grateful_people/success

Five Ways to Cultivate Gratitude at Work

By Jeremy Adam Smith | May 16, 2013

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

How Gratitude Can Help You Through Hard Times

By Robert Emmons | May 13, 2013

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

Five Myths About Gratitude

By Robert Emmons | May 13, 2013

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

A “Thnx” a Day Keeps the Doctor Away

By Emiliana R. Simon-Thomas | December 19, 2012

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

Why Gratitude Works (VIDEO)

By Christine Carter | November 20, 2012

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

Tips for Keeping a Gratitude Journal

By Jason Marsh | November 17, 2011

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

Why Gratitude is Good

By Robert Emmons | November 16, 2010

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

Videos

Three Research-Backed Tips for a Grateful Workplace

By Ryan Fehr | February 2019

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/three_research_backed_tips_for_a_grateful_workplace

Why a Paycheck Isn't a Thank You

By Lynette Silva | February 2019

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/why_a_paycheck_isnt_a_thank_you

When to Express Your Gratitude at Work

By Chris Murchison | May 2019

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/express_gratitude_at_work

Four Lessons I've Learned About Gratitude

By Robert Emmons | May 2019

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/four_lessons_ive_learned_about_gratitude

Do Gratitude Programs Really Make a Difference at Work?

By Diana Jason | February 2019

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/do_gratitude_programs_really_make_a_difference_at_work

How to Create a Workplace Where People Feel Appreciated

By Kate MacAleavey | January 2019

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/how_to_create_a_workplace_where_people_feel_appreciated

Four Myths About Being Grateful at Work

By Amie M. Gordon | January 2019

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/four_myths_about_being_grateful_at_work

Three Ways to Cultivate Gratitude at Work

By Greater Good | November 2017

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/3_tips_gratitude_at_work

Can Gratitude Help People with Heart Disease? (VIDEO)

By Jeff Huffman | September 2014 Gratitude Summit

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/can_gratitude_help_people_with_heart_disease

The Social Benefits of Gratitude (VIDEO)

By Phil Watkins | September 2014

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/video/item/the_social_benefits_of_gratitude

Quizzes

Gratitude Quiz

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take_quiz/gratitude

Grateful Organizations Quiz

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take_quiz/grateful_organizations

Podcasts

A Physician Tries Gratitude Journaling

Science of Happiness Podcast | May 13, 2021

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/podcasts/item/gratitude_journal_health_care

Does Your Doctor Listen to You?

Science of Happiness Podcast | October 24, 2019

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/podcasts/item/does_your_doctor_listen_to_you

A Lesson in Thanks and Vulnerability

Science of Happiness Podcast | February 14, 2019

<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/podcasts/item/stephen-leeper>

Is There Someone You Need to Thank?

Science of Happiness Podcast | April 2, 2018

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/podcasts/item/someone_you_need_to_thank

How Gratitude Benefits Your Brain

Science of Happiness Podcast | March 12, 2018

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/podcasts/item/gratitude_benefits_your_brain

BOOKS

Smith, J. A., Newman, K.M., Marsh, J., Keltner, D. (2020). *The Gratitude Project: How the science of thankfulness can rewire our brains for resilience, optimism, and the greater good*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

A compilation of research-based articles exploring how thankfulness can be cultivated—both personally and in communities large and small—for the benefit of all.

Fiedel, G., & Jacobson, K. (2016). *Stop-Look-Go: A Grateful Practice Workbook and Gratitude Journal*. Mill Valley, CA: Wink Books.

Using the STOP, LOOK, GO technique gratefully borrowed from Brother David Steindl-Rast, this book offers 32 exercises adapted from A Network for Grateful Living and the Greater Good Science Center that explore all aspects of grateful living

Emmons, R. A. (2016). *The Little Book of Gratitude: Create a Life of Happiness and Wellbeing by Giving Thanks*. London, GB: Octopus Publishing.

This book discusses the benefits of gratitude and teaches easy techniques to foster gratitude every day.

Sacks, O. (2015). *Gratitude*. New York, NY: Random House.

The book chronicles Oliver Sacks' thoughts, wishes, regrets, and feelings of love, happiness, and gratitude as he faced the cancer that ended his life at age 82.

Emmons, R. A. (2013). *Gratitude Works!* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

The world's leading scientific expert on gratitude offers a step-by-step guide to becoming a more grateful person.

Kralik, J. (2011). *A Simple Act of Gratitude*. New York, NY: Hyperion.

A memoir on how a man's resolution to write 365 thank you letters in one year changed his life.

Lesowitz, N., & Sammons, M.B. (2009). ***Living Life as a Thank You***. New York, NY: Metro Books.

Presents a simple but comprehensive program for incorporating gratitude into one's life and reaping the many benefits that come from doing so.

Emmons, R. A. (2007). ***Thanks!*** New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.

How the science of gratitude can make you happier.

Emmons, R.A., & McCullough, M.E. (2004). ***The Psychology of Gratitude***. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

A collection of essays by academics on the science of gratitude.