

By Lacy Wolff, ERS Health Promotion Administrator



For the month of December our wellness focus is on gratitude. While gratitude is not a traditional wellness concept, the science of gratitude has received a lot of attention for its health benefits in recent years. In this newsletter we will cover some strategies for you and your family to incorporate this simple and effective resilience-building skill into your lives.

Let's start with a quick exercise:

1. Close your eyes and think of the things that you appreciate right now. This can include people, relationships, personal qualities, your favorite critters, moments in your past, or something you are looking forward to.
2. Take out a piece of paper and list the top three items and dig a little deeper. Why do you appreciate this person, place or thing? Provide as many details as possible.

In doing this simple exercise, you have taken a step toward improving your health. And, the research shows that the more often you do this, the more you build resilience. Resilience is the capacity to endure challenges and recover from them. Most people could use a little more resilience to endure the remainder of 2020!

According to the latest research, a daily gratitude practice can rewire your neural network (the way you think) to be more positive. This practice has also been proven to reduce inflammation that can lead to heart, joint and other types of chronic disease.

Counting blessings or writing a gratitude list before bed promotes better sleep, lower blood pressure, better digestion, and a stronger immune system.

The next time you are feeling down, pull out your gratitude lists, mentally or literally, and remember all you have to be grateful for.

Here are a few ways to incorporate gratitude into your daily life:

- Create a gratitude journal and make writing in it part of your morning or evening ritual. Focus on specific events, moments, people you have interacted with, pets or even technology that you are grateful for. Express why you are grateful for these in your journal.
- Ask those around you what they are grateful for. Encourage an attitude of gratitude through the questions you ask: What was the best moment of your day? What was your biggest win today?
- Download a gratitude app. There are many free apps available for both iPhones and Androids.
- Share your gratitude lists with others—including your wellness coordinator! [insert email address here]

As with most things worth doing, developing an attitude of gratitude takes effort and energy. It's energy well spent, however. Practicing gratitude can make a lasting change in the way we see the world while also improving our health.



In partnership with ERS, we are participating in a webinar titled ***The Science and Practical Application of Gratitude***. You can register for this webinar through [this registration link](#).