

By Lacy Wolff, ERS Health Promotion Administrator



When my 17-year old returned home from a recent trip to Fort Davis, he told me about an experience he had while stargazing. He said that looking at the night sky filled with millions of stars contemplating galaxies and universes that we can't fully comprehend was so intense that he felt dizzy, small and overwhelmed. He also shared that this was one of the BEST moments of his trip. What my son was perfectly describing was the feeling of awe.

There is a growing body of research that shows that finding and connecting to the feeling of awe can be good for your health. During the holidays, when stress levels tend to be high, taking some time explore and search for awe in your daily experiences may help to reduce your stress and connect to your loved ones.

Awe is defined as an overwhelming feeling of reverence, admiration, fear, etc., in response to that which is grand, sublime, and extremely powerful.

You may have recall experiencing this feeling yourself while

- swimming in the ocean,
- star gazing,
- listening to music or looking at art,
- watching a child take their first steps, or
- touring historic buildings, like our state's Capitol.

According to Richard Sima in his recent [Washington Post article](#) on this topic, "research has repeatedly found that experiencing something extraordinary may make us (and our worries) feel small. And not in a bad way."

During the 2022 Virtual Wellness Fair, Kristen Huff J.D. led a talk on this topic and shared that for her, finding awe in nature is a shortcut to gratitude, especially on days when gratitude may be a difficult emotion to connect to. She said that by simply going out on an awe-walk in her neighborhood she can find something that will generate the feeling of awe. An old tree, a flower, a bee, a child riding a bicycle. Awe is an emotion that is easy for us to connect to if we are paying attention to what is happening around us.

During the holidays this year, I hope you can take some opportunities to find awe in your everyday experiences.

Learn more about awe through the AWE-some recorded version of our [Morning Check-in with Kristen Huff, J.D.](#) from October 21st.