

## November Well-Being Activity – Showing Gratitude to Yourself and Others

Gratitude and self-care go hand in hand. This month's challenge focuses on ways you can show care to others as well as yourself. With the holiday season quickly approaching, we might experience a wide array of emotions from excitement, joy, anticipation as well as feeling overwhelmed, anxiety, sadness, etc. One way to combat the not-so-joyful feelings is to practice gratitude. Another way is to prioritize ourselves during a time that is often focused on others.

### November's Well-Being Challenge:

#### Challenge:

1. Purchase and send at least 1 Thankful Bag to a colleague.
2. Complete the Well-Being Screening at the November Wellness Fair.



#### Submit participation on the Employee Intranet Well-Being page and tell us:

- 1a. Who did you deliver your Thankful Bag and note to?
- 1b. What you were thankful for? You are only required to send 1 Thankful Bag but are invited to do as many as you'd like!
- 2a. Complete the Well-Being Screening ([sign up here](#))
- 2b. If applicable, compare your well-being screening data from last year and reflect on improvements and share what activity or habit change helped achieve identified improvements?

#### Why Practice Gratitude:

Building muscle strength can help protect your body from injury, improve your ability to perform everyday tasks, and reduce your risk for heart attack or stroke. Stronger muscles have other benefits including boosting your metabolic rate, so you burn more calories even at rest.

## Benefits:

A little gratitude can do wonders for your mood. When you practice gratitude, you shift your thoughts away from negative emotions and uncomfortable sensations. Instead, you begin to focus on good things that you may have overlooked.

Rather than focusing on the misfortune of having a flat tire, for example, you consider how your job has made it possible to pay for repairs. Or you shift your focus to how fortunate you are to have close friends who are willing to drive you home.

This kind of thinking leads to a release of serotonin and dopamine, chemicals in the brain that are associated with happiness and pleasure. Acknowledging gratitude also decreases stress hormones. The short-term result is a reduction in anxiety and an improvement in mood. In the long-term, regularly practicing gratitude may also lead to lasting changes in your brain, priming you to be more grateful going forward.

## Physical and Mental Health Benefits:

- **Improved focus.** Gratitude might make it easier for you to focus. If you begin to view the task in front of you — whether it's schoolwork or job duties — in a more positive light, you spend less energy feeling stressed about it. You might even begin to view challenges, such as an upcoming exam, as opportunities rather than hurdles. This can improve your emotional resiliency.
- **Higher self-esteem.** Viewing the world with a sense of gratitude can change the way you think about your own worth. Imagine that a friend treats you to lunch. As you express your appreciation, you also begin to realize that your friend is spending time and resources on you because they value you. You then internalize the thought that you're important to others.
- **Increased patience.** The results of 2016 research seemed to indicate that people who regularly express gratitude are more patient. So, if you want to increase self-control and reduce impulsiveness, try practicing gratitude. Other research shows a potential connection between gratitude and other virtues, such as humility and wisdom.
- **Better sleep.** Some research links increased gratitude with higher quality sleep and fewer sleep disturbances. This might be because expressing gratitude right before bed allows you to fall asleep with a more positive outlook.
- **Decreased Blood Pressure.** Gratitude can also come with plenty of physical benefits as well. For example, as your gratefulness reduces your stress and brings you closer to loved ones, you may see a decrease in your blood pressure and levels of inflammation. This can give way to better overall cardiovascular health.

## Well-Being Screening Information:

Sign-ups are now available for well-being screenings at the Benefits Fair in the Bryant Center! This is a great opportunity to learn about your health and your numbers. Even if you know your numbers and where you stand with your health, we encourage you to sign up so you compare your numbers to the last time you were screened. It is recommended for most people to participate in a health screening at least every 12 months. Screenings will be offered from 7 AM – 11 AM. This is being offered as a benefit to all Stoughton Health employees!

Select a screening time on Wednesday, November 15<sup>th</sup> by using the link below. For best results, please fast for 12 hours prior to your time and make sure you stay well hydrated with only plain water. To make our process easier, socks, tennis shoes, and clothes that are easy to move in are preferred. <https://form.jotform.com/232883445104152>

## Why You Should Prioritize Yourself:

Practicing self-care can be many different things. One way to practice self-care is to prioritize yourself and your own health over others. Self-care can reduce stress, strengthen energy and restore health. Completing the well-being screening allows you to keep a pulse on your own health and identify areas of growth and opportunity. In the moment, making habit changes can feel overwhelming. You may not see results right away so they can feel ineffective. Completing the well-being screening annually helps you recognize areas of growth overtime. When you see growth, you can explicitly connect activities or habit changes that helped you achieve the growth which can fuel your motivation to continue. It also helps you identify areas of opportunity that you can focus your attention on going forward.

## Sources:

[Giving thanks can make you happier - Harvard Health](#)

[Health benefits of gratitude | UCLA Health](#)