



Wellbeing Insights

Living a Better, More Vibrant Life



The Gift of Gratitude

Gratitude has been quite the buzzword as of late and with good reason. Research about the benefits of experiencing gratitude is clear. Besides giving you “all the feels” in the moment you are experiencing gratitude, the positive effects on your brain health long-term are quite impressive. Additionally, research suggest that a grateful heart is a healthier heart, as it assists in fending off depression, stress and anxiety, which can increase the risk of heart disease.

So, what is gratitude? It is simply the quality of being thankful, as well as a readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness. Gratitude is an emotional state, and while some people may be naturally predisposed to experience it more frequently, we are all

capable of cultivating a more grateful mindset. With practice and intention, it will become more automatic.

This is a favorite time of year for many, in large part because we are surrounded by loved ones and visibly reminded of all that we have to be grateful for, making this an ideal time to jumpstart a sustainable boost in gratitude. Having an attitude of gratitude means making it a habit to express thankfulness and appreciation in all parts of your life on a regular basis, for both the big and small things alike. As New York Times best-selling author Lewis Howes writes in his book, *The School of Greatness*, “If you concentrate on what you have, you’ll always

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Gratitude

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have more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you'll never have enough."

A simple way to create a daily practice is to keep a notepad by your bed, coffee pot or desk and begin and/or end your day by writing something you are grateful for or something that went "right" for you that day. You'll likely be able to think of someone you interacted with or an event that happened that brought you some joy.

However, even on the worst of days, you can start by appreciating the simple daily comforts and things that are within your control:

- You can open a shade to let in natural light or a window to let in a refreshing breeze.
- You can look forward to a warm shower, a good stretch or cup of coffee in the morning to get you going.
- You can greet your neighbor with a smile, hug your kids or partner, or cuddle up with your pet.

You may also find you are thankful for people you don't even know:

- The people who grow, harvest, package and transport the food you purchase and consume.
- The people who make and maintain the roads and transportation systems that allow you to get where you need to go.
- The people who make it possible for you to access the internet.
- The musicians, artists, athletes and entertainers who create amusing, moving and uplifting outlets for you.
- The people who help make it possible for you to grow personally and professionally or who provide you with spiritual nourishment.

You might also start your practice by planning to volunteer, which is shown to increase gratitude. Or, you could recruit a friend to exchange daily photos of bright spots in your day. Lastly, check out our Mindful Minute practice for a daily exercise that will have you feeling thankful in no time.

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Mindful Minute



As you work toward a genuine attitude of gratitude, you might start by noticing where you're already handing out thanks. Since most of us express the sentiment of gratitude in a habitual capacity several times a day, it offers a great starting point for us to **turn mundane pleasantries into genuine gratitude.**

1. Notice the thank yous that you dish out in one day. Is it frequent? Habitual? Genuine? An afterthought?
2. Gauge your emotions. How are you feeling when you say or type out thank you? Do a quick scan of your body; are you actually experiencing appreciation or something else?
3. Bring awareness to your thanks. When your instinct to thank someone arises, pause for a moment. See if you can bring some authentic appreciation to the gesture you're acknowledging, no matter how small.

As you become more aware of the instances when you are giving thanks and begin to bring authenticity to those moments, you may find there is a ripple effect and that you begin to notice many things you'd like to express your thanks for. Savor each one and enjoy the benefits of gratitude.



On the Menu

Crazy for Cranberries

Cranberries are one of only three fruits native to the U.S., making them a Thanksgiving staple. Cranberries are rich in fiber, manganese, and Vitamins C and E. With only 23 calories per half cup, they may be the most figure-friendly food around during the holidays! In terms of antioxidant content, these flavorful berries outrank nearly every single fruit and vegetable, topped only by blueberries.

As if that weren't impressive enough, cranberries claim stake to a completely unique property in the food world – bacterial anti-adhesion. Put simply, cranberries prevent bacteria from sticking to your tissues and multiplying. It is this ability that makes cranberries a very potent ally in the prevention and management of:

- Urinary tract infections
- Gum disease and cavities (e.g., plaque buildup on teeth)
- Heart disease (e.g., plaque buildup in the arteries)
- Stomach ulcers

But don't be fooled by dried cranberries, cranberry sauce and cranberry juice; they are typically loaded with sugar. When buying these items, make sure cranberries are listed as the first ingredient and try to find options that are no-sugar added or low-sugar.

Here are a few ways to incorporate cranberries all year long:

- Make a homemade trail mix with unsalted nuts, seeds and dried cranberries. Choose no- or low-sugar added options.
- Include a small handful of frozen cranberries in a fruit smoothie. Incorporate another fruit to add some sweetness.
- Add dried cranberries to your oatmeal or whole grain cereal. Try adding spices like cinnamon to balance out the tartness of the berries.
- Toss dried or fresh cranberries into your favorite muffin or cookie recipes.

Keep It Fresh

Fresh cranberries can be refrigerated up to two months and freeze well for even longer. As with any fruit, one bad berry will begin to spoil the whole bunch, so be sure to toss out any wrinkled or soft berries before putting them in the fridge.

Cranberry Vinaigrette

To add a seasonal flair to any salad, give this dressing a try.

Ingredients:

- ½ cup fresh cranberries
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup walnut oil or flax seed oil
- 1 shallot, peeled, cored and quartered
- 2 tsp. red wine vinegar
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tsp. agave or honey
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground pepper

Directions:

Puree shallot, cranberries, olive oil, vinegar, walnut or flax oil, thyme, agave or honey, salt and pepper in a mini prep, food processor or blender until as smooth as possible. Store in a jar in the refrigerator up to one week.

Nutrition Info

Per Serving (2 Tbsp.)

Calories	127
Fat	14g
Carbohydrates	4g
	Sugar 3g
	Fiber 1g
Protein	0g
Sodium	143mg



Adapted from healthyseasonalrecipes.com

The Basics of Bladder Health

Our bladders fulfill incredibly important functions for us to live normally but aren't often a headline topic when discussing wellbeing. What better time than Bladder Health Awareness Month to shine a spotlight on this important organ? It's easy for us to take for granted a healthy bladder, but when problems arise, it can affect our ability to participate in daily activities – even those that are relatively mundane.

Although bladder problems are common, many people don't think about bladder health until they experience symptoms. Bladder infections can cause pain or burning when urinating, increased frequency of urinating, and cramping or pressure in the lower abdomen or lower back.

A number of conditions may cause symptoms, including but not limited to overactive bladder (OAB), bladder outlet obstruction, bladder pain syndrome/interstitial cystitis, bladder cancers and, perhaps most commonly, urinary tract infection (UTI). Beyond physical discomfort, unhealthy bladder conditions are associated with increased anxiety and depression, decreased physical activity, reduced work productivity and impaired sexual function. OAB and UTI are bothersome, and both can be incapacitating conditions. UTI is associated with depression in men and women, with the prevalence of depression increasing with severity of incontinence.

Being proactive is important for long-term maintenance of bladder health, which is why it's important to understand what can irritate the bladder:

- Drinks that contain caffeine
- Fizzy drinks, especially lite or diet types with artificial sweeteners like Aspartame or Saccharine

- Alcohol, particularly when consumed with no mixer
- Acid in some fruit juices can make problems worse for some people.
- Some medications, including antihistamines, antipsychotic drugs and decongestants, can cause you to retain urine.
- Being overweight can also make problems worse. Extra weight may put pressure on the pelvic floor muscles, which can become weak and may result in urinary incontinence.

There are a number of things you can do to maintain a healthy bladder:

- **Consume plenty of water.** While guidelines vary, drinking at least two liters of water each day is a good place to start. When you're not drinking enough, the bladder gets used to holding smaller amounts of urine and can become sensitive.
- **Quit tobacco use.** Smoking is a leading cause of bladder cancer.

- **Strengthen your pelvic floor.** According to research funded by the National Institutes of Health, almost 25% of women face pelvic floor disorders, and this number increases with age. Many common exercise routines do not require you to tap into your pelvic floor muscles enough to strengthen them sufficiently. Speak with your doctor about appropriate exercises, or view some examples from Harvard Health [here](#).
- **Eat plenty of fiber.** Because the bladder and colon are in close proximity, being constipated puts constant pressure on the bladder. The recommended fiber intake is 30 to 38 grams a day for men, 25 grams a day for women 18 to 50 years old, and 21 grams a day for women over 50.

Maintaining a healthy bladder is important to overall quality of life. If you experience symptoms of an unhealthy bladder, speak with your physician.



Navigating the Gaming World with Your Child

If you're a parent of a young child or teen, you've likely faced the challenges of gaming. Even active kids involved in sports and extracurricular programs can make time (lots of it in many cases) for video games. Digital technologies are part of our children's lives so it's important to understand the phenomenon and how to strike a healthy balance with the draw of video games.

Game creators work hard to hook players on their games. They use predictive algorithms and principles of behavioral economics to entice young gamers to binge. Games become addictive because they trigger the brain's reward system, much in the same way as drugs or alcohol, according to some studies.

Social gaming satisfies the human need for being in charge, feeling competent and feeling connected with others. It makes gaming even more compulsive and hard to quit.

Your kid might even tell you he needs to go online because his buddies rely on him to join them in a competition. In addition, the gamer often works hard toward achieving a goal, and quitting the game would waste everything the gamer, and their online companions, have worked to earn.

While the American Academy of Pediatrics has set some guidelines on childhood screen time, there are not official recommendations. Earlier this year, a group of scientists wrote an open letter asking for screen-time advice to be based on actual evidence. It stated that playing online games may not be inherently harmful, which certainly doesn't help us as parents or caregivers decide how to set gaming limits in our homes.

That said, encouraging healthy gaming comes down to a combination of education, empathy, and setting limits and

expectations. Parents need to understand the desire for and importance of it but also set boundaries.

What can you do?

- Understand the relevance and importance of gaming to your child.
- Get involved, learn and understand the games your kids are playing. This will help make conversations around gaming easier and more enjoyable.
- Be knowledgeable about the buy-up options in online games and familiar with parental controls.



- Play a game or watch them play every once in a while.
- Help your kid prioritize their time gaming compared to other activities and consider limiting video game time per day.
- Role model and enjoy unplugged playtime, like walking the dog and other outdoor activities together.
- Designate other media-free times together, for example, during dinner, in the car, one hour before bed, no gaming before school, etc.

With the right information and mindset, video games can teach us how to invent, how to play, how to win and how to lose. They can be inspiring, hilarious and even scary at times.

Keep tabs on uncharacteristic behavior, such as angry outbursts, sleepiness or other signs that your kid is having difficulty navigating the gaming life. Talk to the school counselor or a physician if you have concerns. For additional insight on gaming, and especially when it becomes too much, check out The Real Sports docuseries episode "[Gaming Mania](#)" on HBO.com for free.

Quick Tips for Holiday Overload

The advent of the holiday season can evoke an array of emotions, including feeling overwhelmed. Tacked on to the already overfilled schedules that many Americans report having, holiday preparation and activities, such as parties, shopping, performances, culinary adventures and more, can feel like too much to manage. Taking strategic steps to simplify the holidays can help make the season merrier. Here are some ideas to encourage you:

Manage expectations. One of the best ways to increase your joy is to decrease what you require of yourself. Let go of the pressure for everything to go perfectly. There are limits to what we can do, spend and handle and that's ok. The holiday doesn't have to be perfect or just like last year. Families change and grow, and our traditions and expectations deserve a little fluidity to evolve as well.

Say no without guilt. There is no shortage of holiday parties and events that you'll be invited to. Decide which events or obligations feel most important or bring you the most joy and consider declining the others. Creating more blankspace on your calendar can make your life feel more manageable, and despite the fear of saying no you will likely find that others will respect your decision.

Buy off the shelf. Have you been flooded with requests for a special potluck dish, holiday treat or side for a dinner? While you may feel beholden to tradition by bringing your signature dish, your grandmother's recipe or the like, cut yourself some slack. Consider store-bought items. You can incorporate them into a semi-homemade dish or brought as is. If you want to spruce it up, serve on a festive platter.

Shop in your pajamas. Online shopping can be a tremendous time saver, whether you opt for delivery or pick-up of items. You can avoid jammed parking lots and malls, long lines and the overall craziness of the season, freeing up your time for other activities or simply some downtime. While big-box store bargains are great, consider small businesses and fair trade dealers as well. Even if the gift is a bit smaller, you can bet it will be more unique and meaningful.

Give gifts from the heart. Are there gifts of time and talent that you could share with your family and friends? A piece of children's artwork, an invitation to dinner at your home, a family outing, a volunteer day with them at their favorite non-profit, help with a home improvement project or even free babysitting are all examples of gifts with meaning.

Whether you decide to try one of these ideas or you find other ways to simplify the holidays, the effect can be very powerful. Gifting yourself this break can allow you to be more present, more joyful and at ease. Peaceful holidays to you!

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Contributing Writers

Abby Stevenson Engagement & Wellbeing Consultant
Angie Kennedy Sr. Engagement & Wellbeing Consultant
Bridgette O'Connor... Sr. Engagement & Wellbeing Consultant
Kelley Elliott.....Engagement & Wellbeing Account Manager
Emily NollDirector, Engagement & Wellbeing Consulting

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