



MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM ATLANTIC BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS | November 2022

Gratitude Is Good for Your Mental Health

"Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgiving, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings." - Proverb

You might have noticed that when you feel grateful there is often a lift in your mood. If someone expresses gratitude towards you, it usually feels good in return. Well, the good news is that this feel-good connection is backed up with some science. This month, we will focus on the feelings of gratitude and how they can be cultivated, shared, and improve our mental health. We have all been through a few challenging years and could use a little help lifting our mood.

With just a little reflection, we can take an inventory of those challenges. We have weathered an historic pandemic that cost the lives and health of many of our loved ones. It disrupted celebrations, rituals, schools and businesses across the country and world. There has been an increase in polarization and conflict that has pulled us apart and made connecting with each other harder and harder. *We are moving forward but the impact of all of this has taken a toll on our mental health.*

What does gratitude have to offer us at this moment in time?

Prolonged stress has a negative impact on both our physical health and our mental health. Finding ways to reduce stress is an important habit we all need to work on in our daily lives. Building in a practice of gratitude is a way to help.

"Gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions."
- Zig Ziglar



Atlantic Health System
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Gratitude Facts

Research demonstrates gratitude activates specific regions of the brain, including the anterior cingulate cortex and medial prefrontal cortex.

These regions are part of the circuitry responsible for moral cognition, value judgment and perspective taking.

Wow! You can even grow your brain bigger with gratitude! "People who express and feel gratitude have a higher volume of gray matter in the right inferior temporal gyrus (Zahn, et al., 2014)."

Get some feel-good brain chemicals flowing with gratitude! "When we express gratitude and receive the same, our brain releases dopamine and serotonin, the two crucial neurotransmitters responsible for our emotions, and they make us feel 'good'.



Benefits of Gratitude

1. It's a motivator
2. It reduces stress
3. Reduces worry and frustration
4. Helps override negative thinking
5. Improves our sense of value and worth
6. It improves social connection

[How Gratitude Helps Anxiety and Depression - Roseann Capanna-Hodge \(drroseann.com\)](#)

[The Positive Impact of Gratitude on Mental Health | Psychology Today](#)



Gratitude vs. Toxic Positivity

Have you ever been around someone who is just too darn positive? There is such a thing as toxic positivity and that is not the same as authentic gratitude. True gratitude acknowledges the hard stuff and can feel the pain of loss and disappointments. During the hard stuff true gratitude can still find something good to hold onto. This is the thing that can help protect us from resentments, anger, hatred or totally giving up. True gratitude can be the life raft that help lead us out of depression and anxiety until the storm passes



Who Can You be Grateful For?

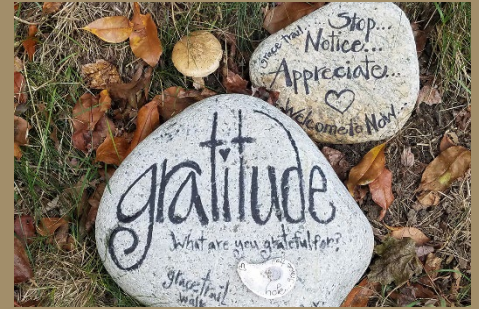
1. Be thankful for yourself for getting through challenges and doing your best
2. Be thankful for others for helping you out. Even the store clerk or the stranger who opens the door.
3. Be thankful for Mother Nature for the bounty of the earth, the sunshine and even the rain.
4. Be thankful to the Almighty in whatever form you worship



Gratitude Ideas

Want to grow your gratitude muscles? Just like with exercise you can't expect to have big muscles if you only lift weights once. The same is true with gratitude. You need to have a daily dose to feel the full impact and benefit.

Try these ideas to strengthen your gratitude muscles and boost your mood. Kids can try it, too!



1. Commit to writing down five things for which you are grateful every day. Yes! Even on the not so good days! That's when you really need it most.
2. Start a couple or family gratitude journal and write things down for the others to discover at a later date – maybe just when they need it most!
3. Use your five senses to wake up your gratitude. Use your eyes to see. Wow! I'm grateful I can see and if I can't see I am grateful to have people to help. Use your ears. What sounds do you hear? How about your sense of taste when you dig into that turkey dinner! Yummm Now you are really cooking with gratitude!
4. Take a gratitude walk with your family or friends. See who can name more things they feel grateful for. You will all be smiling at the end of that walk!
5. Start a gratitude jar. Have everyone write it down and put it in the jar and at the end of the week share what you all came up with.
6. Give it away!! When we show gratitude to someone else it is the gift that keeps on giving. That appreciation lights up the other person's heart and mood and that will light up the giver as well. It just keeps on going back and forth! Give it a try.
7. At the end of the day before heading off to sleep take a moment to notice anything that you can that you feel some gratitude. Maybe it is just that you got through a tough day!

CRISIS RESOURCES

If you feel you or someone you know may harm themselves or someone else:

- **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:** 988
- **The Trevor Lifeline for LGBTQIA+ Youth :** 1-866-488-7386
- **Disaster Distress Helpline:** Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.
- **Veterans Crisis Line:** Dial 988 and Press 1
- **Dial 211:** 211 provides callers with information about and referrals to social services for every day needs and in times of crisis
- **SAMHSA Treatment Locator:** findtreatment.samhsa.gov



**Atlantic Behavioral Health ACCESS Center:
888-247-1400**

**Atlantic Behavioral Health Crisis Intervention
Services 24/7 Hotlines:**

Chilton Medical Center: 973 – 831 – 5078
Hackettstown Medical Center 908 – 454 – 5141
Morristown Medical Center: 973 – 540 – 0100
Overlook Medical Center: 908 – 522 – 3586
Newton Medical Center: 973 – 383 – 0973

Website:



Atlantichealth.org



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Behavioral Health



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