



# TARGETING WELLNESS NEWSLETTER



# GOOD NEWS FOR GOOD HEALTH

## Essential Mindsets for Overall Well-being



### Gratitude From The Heart

This quarter centers around the theme of Gratitude, a term that may seem overused but holds significant importance.

Why the emphasis on gratitude during February, known as Heart Health Month? It's an opportune time to delve into this practice, given the undeniable connection between gratitude and our heart's well-being.

## QUARTER ONE GRATITUDE

January - March 2024

### CONCEPT

Gratitude, when cultivated as a habit and practice, possesses the transformative power to reshape our perception of well-being. It becomes a guiding force in how we navigate the multitude of stressors in our lives, contributing to an overall enhancement of our physical and mental health.

Consider this: on any given day, we generate between 12,000 to 60,000 thoughts. Astonishingly, 80% of these thoughts lean towards the negative. Some experts in neuroscience attribute this negativity bias to our brain's evolutionary focus on seeking potential threats in the environment for survival. This inclination has persisted, forming a tendency to give more weight to negative experiences.

Have you ever experienced receiving numerous positive and encouraging responses, only to be significantly impacted by a single negative comment? This phenomenon, known as "negativity bias," illustrates how our minds tend to fixate on the adverse, affecting our self-confidence and leading to prolonged rumination.

In today's world, we face an onslaught of negative stimuli from various sources, contributing to heightened stress and unhappiness.



However, embracing gratitude doesn't imply turning a blind eye to the challenges around us. Instead, it **serves as a means to fortify our inner resilience in confronting these challenges**. It encourages us to shift our focus from looking at what "went wrong" to "what went right".



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CHALLENGES OF TODAY.

What we choose to focus on has a profound impact on our experiences. If we concentrate on the negative, it tends to multiply. Conversely, by directing our attention to what we have to be grateful for, we open ourselves to a heightened awareness of the positives in our lives. Numerous studies highlight that individuals with a predisposition to negative emotions face an elevated risk of heart disease.

In essence, the practice of gratitude becomes a proactive approach to nurturing our well-being amid life's challenges, steering us towards a mindset that acknowledges the good, fosters resilience, and contributes to heart health.



## GRATITUDE AND HEART HEALTH

Research has shown that expressing gratitude can play an important role in one's cardiovascular health and in changing the cardiovascular response to stress.

In the United States, it is estimated that 660,000 people will suffer from their first heart attack and 1 in 7 deaths is due to this disease. There have been several studies done showing the positive impact gratitude may have on preventing heart attacks and improving existing heart conditions. This is primarily because gratitude helps to lower our heart rate response to stressful situations and reduce inflammation, a leading cause of many diseases! Gratitude also helps with managing other lifestyle choices such as getting enough sleep, making healthy food choices and getting enough exercise. It's certainly worth trying, wouldn't you agree?



**Gratitude as a trait is defined as having a predisposition to notice and appreciate what is good in the world, being optimistic, feeling you have a purpose in life, and experiencing more positive thoughts.**



### How does gratitude and thinking positively affect our heart?

Negative emotions cause a release of stress hormones and physical stress response that results in a higher heart rate and blood pressure. Studies show that folks who focus on being grateful are less likely to experience this stress response also called The Fight or Flight Response. This is because those who are happier tend to have **healthier coping strategies** like making healthier food choices, getting adequate exercise, experience better sleep all helping to manage stress.

# THE GRATITUDE JAR THAT OPENED HEARTS

## >>> A GRATITUDE STORY THAT CHANGED A WORK ENVIRONMENT

In a small but tight-knit office, employees decided to create a 'Gratitude Jar.' Every day, team members would write a note expressing gratitude for a colleague's kindness, support, or positive impact. As the jar filled up, they planned a surprise gratitude session.

During the session, they took turns reading out the notes anonymously. The atmosphere was filled with warmth and appreciation as each person heard how their actions had positively affected others. Laughter, smiles, and even a few tears of joy were shared.

What started as a simple jar turned into a powerful reminder of the positive impact everyone had on each other's lives. The team realized that expressing gratitude not only made individuals feel valued but also strengthened their bonds as a cohesive and appreciative work family.

## PRACTICE FOR FEBRUARY

Pick whatever resonates with you. Try one or multiple, every day or once a week...the choice is yours. Take your time and enjoy the process...we can never give too much appreciation for our lives!



## >>> HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?

1. What did your **body do for you** today? We take about 8 million breaths per year. Your feet can take you up mountains. Your arms can hold someone you love. Take a moment now to marvel at the amazing bodies we were given.
2. What did you **feed your body** to nourish yourself today? Was it something made from whole food, something bought and consumed in a hurry or something processed? Reflect on this **without judging** yourself. This is just a way to become more present with your choices.
3. What did you enjoy doing in the form of **movement/physical activity** today? Did you give it your all when exercising today or find a quiet moment while sitting in traffic to reflect on the good in your life?
4. Who did you **enjoy connecting with** today? Is there someone who sets your heart on fire, always has a smile for you, has your back or makes you laugh until you cry?
5. How did you **spend your time** today? Every single day we are given 24 brand new hours. Did you spend it mostly in regret of the past that cannot be changed or fear thinking of the uncertainty of the future out of our control? Take a moment to find the gift of right now. It is all we have that is why it's called the present, it is truly a gift.



Come up with your own gratitude practice and share with me at [debby\\_schiffer@targetingwellness.com](mailto:debby_schiffer@targetingwellness.com)

# February Radiates Love



## Have you gotten your “dose” of oxytocin today?

Oxytocin, like endorphins or serotonin, is considered one of the “feel-good” hormones. When our body produces this hormone, it gives us a boost of positive feelings and has shown to decrease stress and anxiety levels. Low levels of this hormone have been linked to symptoms of depression.



Can you feel  
the love?

### How do we increase oxytocin?

- Exercise - especially high-intensity cardio workouts
- Music - especially when people sing in a group which adds the element of bonding
- Simple acts of touch - giving someone a massage, cuddling or giving someone a hug even petting your furry friends.

## ARE YOU UP FOR ANOTHER PRACTICE?

For the next week, **practice appreciating one person a day** via text, email, phone or in person with an act of kindness through expressing gratitude.

Perhaps write someone a letter, yes the old fashion way, and let them know how much you appreciate them perhaps a former teacher or boss or mentor. **Not only will the receiver feel good but notice how good it makes you feel as the one giving.**

**Showing someone else how grateful you are for them increases the oxytocin hormone in your body which helps build resilience.**

**THE HEARTMATH INSTITUTE** FOCUSES ON THE IMPACT OUR MOOD HAS ON OUR HEART. PERHAPS YOU'VE BEEN HEARING ABOUT THE MEASURABLE STATE CALLED HEART COHERENCE. LEARNING TO BRING YOURSELF AND OTHERS INTO THIS HIGHLY BENEFICIAL STATE HOLDS THE POTENTIAL TO BRING ABOUT LASTING PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND GLOBAL CHANGE.