

LIVE WELL WORK WELL

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THE POSITIVE EFFECTS of Expressing Gratitude

Discussion about gratitude has become more and more common, and these days you can easily find a stock of gratitude journals and notebooks at your local stationery store or bookseller and lists of tips on how to express gratitude in your life. As it turns out, these expressions of gratitude are a good thing for our minds and bodies. In a new article in the National Communication Association's Review of Communication, authors Stephen M. Yoshimura and Cassandra Berzins explore the connection between gratitude expression and psychological and physical well-being. As one might expect, positivity creates positive results for our well-being.

What the authors write may seem obvious: "Gratitude consistently associates with many positive social, psychological, and health states, such as an increased likelihood of helping others, optimism, exercise, and reduced reports of physical symptoms." However, the authors argue that not enough research has been done on the communication of gratitude and its effect on well-being, and they propose further avenues for analysis of gratitude messages and their impact.

Expressions of gratitude are often a response to others' acts of generosity. If you receive a gift or an act of kindness from someone, you reciprocate by showing gratitude, sometimes publicly, to highlight the giver's altruistic act. Gratitude is a different emotion from happiness because it usually stems from the actions of another individual. "To experience it, one must receive a message, and interpret the message," the authors write.

Numerous studies show that expressing and experiencing gratitude increases life satisfaction, vitality, hope, and optimism. Moreover, it contributes to decreased levels of depression, anxiety, envy, and job-related stress and burnout. Perhaps most intriguing is that people who experience and express gratitude have reported fewer symptoms of physical illness, more exercise, and better quality of sleep.

While the immediate effects of gratitude expression are clear, the authors argue that it also contributes to long-term success in relationships and personal wellbeing "up to six months after a deliberate expression to one's relationship's partner." Just as we periodically boost our immune systems through vaccines, we can boost our relationships and mental state by expressing gratitude to our partners on a regular basis. The authors leave us with a general health practice: regularly communicate gratitude to enhance our social connectedness.



National Communication Association. "Expressing gratitude makes us healthier: Who wouldn't be grateful for that?" ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/04/170411104712.htm (accessed January 19, 2018).

AVOIDING THE SPREAD of the Common Cold

The winter months are commonly associated with decreasing temperatures and increasing cases of the common cold. Typically, symptoms of the common cold come on gradually and start with a sore throat or irritated sinuses.

According to Healthline, when you have a cold you're contagious approximately one to two days before symptoms start and can continue to be contagious for up to seven days after you've become sick. Unfortunately, many people can't stay home for that long to fully recover. Consider the following suggestions to help avoid becoming ill or passing on your cold to a co-worker, friend, or family member:

- Wash your hands with warm water and soap often.
- Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- Sanitize commonly touched surfaces.
- Always cough and sneeze into your elbow to prevent spreading germs.

Is it a Cold or the Flu?

Cold:

- Loss of appetite
- Sore throat
- Sneezing
- Cough
- Vomiting

Flu:

- Muscle pain
- High Fever
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Chills



HEALTHY RESOLUTIONS May Lead to Reduced Cancer Risk

Research published this week in *ecancermedalscience* may provide the motivation needed to stick with the resolutions you set for yourself this new year: those hard-won healthy choices might lead to a total reduction of about one-third in cancer risk.

Researchers led by Professor Peter Elwood of Cardiff University, UK examined preliminary data from the UK Biobank, a prospective study of half a million subjects. They sorted through the data to identify healthy behaviors, including not smoking, maintaining a low BMI, participating in regular physical activity, eating a healthy diet, and limiting alcohol intake, and compared them to the risk of cancer over several years.

Together, the collection of healthy behaviors contributed to a total reduction of about one-third in cancer risk and possibly a greater reduction in cancer mortality.

These results may not sound surprising; most people are aware that healthy behaviors have some general benefit – otherwise they wouldn't be "healthy." The real problem is translating the vague idea of lifestyle choices being "good" into useful evidence, which is what this study provides. Next comes the challenge of translating this evidence to useful, realistic recommendations.

"Perhaps the advice to take up one additional healthy behavior is the most acceptable message for most subjects," says Professor Peter Elwood. "In our study each additional healthy behavior was associated with a reduction of about 8% in cancer, independent of the effects of the other behaviors."

"The take-home message is that healthy behaviors can have a truly tangible benefit." Professor Elwood adds, "A healthy lifestyle has many benefits additional to cancer reduction – it costs nothing, has no undesirable side effects.... and is better than any pill!"

ecancermedalscience. "Don't give up now-keeping your New Year's resolutions could reduce cancer risk: Those hard-won healthy choices may lead to a total reduction of about one third in cancer risk." *ScienceDaily*. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/01/180104120301.htm (accessed January 19, 2018).



COMBATING A SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE with Simple Changes

“Even if we exercise regularly, most of us sit or recline for an average of 11 hours a day,” said Wuyou (Yoah) Sui, a PhD student in the Department of Kinesiology at Western University in London, Canada. “Our bodies just aren’t designed to function well with such low levels of activity—we all have to move more often than we do, or endure a variety of chronic health issues.”

Prolonged sitting increases the risk of heart disease, obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and some forms of cancer, several recent studies show. But creating new, healthier habits can be challenging for people who work long hours at their desks.

In a study published in *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-being*, Sui and co-author Kinesiology Prof. Harry Prapavessis describe how students modified their sedentary behavior through a structured, six-week process that has also had success in smoking cessation and seatbelt compliance. For these Western students, the process had students choose their best strategies to take more frequent breaks, which for some of them included setting timers and phone reminders.

After six weeks, the students had turned these cues into habits: they took breaks, on average, once an hour in comparison to their previous 90-minute sitting sessions. By contrast, a control group showed no improvement in its sitting habits.

University of Western Ontario. “Sedentary desk jockeys, stand up for your health: Simple strategies can help sedentary people rise up.” ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/01/180104152959.htm (accessed January 19, 2018).

“This study shows we can combat ‘occupational sitting’ not by adding a new activity but by sliding a substitute regimen into the place of an existing one.” For students or office workers, those changes could include standing during phone calls, making a few short trips to the water fountain instead of one lingering visit, and replacing departmental email conversation with a walk-and-talk.

“We can build into our day some simple strategies to bring us out of our chairs and off our couches,” said Prapavessis, who is director of the Exercise and Health Psychology Lab at Westerns’ School of Kinesiology.



FEBRUARY RECIPE

Mexican Chicken Soup

- 3 pounds skinless chicken
- 2 cups tomatoes (chopped)
- 1 clove garlic (minced)
- ½ cup onion (chopped)
- ¼ cup mild canned chilies (diced)
- 2 cups canned pinto or garbanzo beans (drained)
- 1 cup tortilla strips (optional)

Cut chicken into bite size pieces and place in a large saucepan. Add enough water to cover. Cook until tender, about 25 minutes. Remove chicken pieces from the broth. Add tomatoes, garlic, onion, and chilies. Remove chicken meat from the bones and return meat to broth. Add beans and salt and pepper to taste. Simmer for about 15 minutes. Garnish with tortilla strips.

Yield: 6 servings. Each serving provides 390 Calories, 14 g of Fat, 49 g of Protein, 16 g of Carbohydrates, 5 g of Fiber, 4 g of Saturated Fat, 460 mg of Sodium, 2 g of Sugars. Source: USDA



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