

The Health Benefits of Gratitude

It is the time of year where families gather and gratitude is passed around the dinner table along with the turkey and trimmings.

Reflecting on what you are grateful for might be a time honored tradition during the holiday season, but mental health professionals say it should be a part of your life year round. According to Cheryl Crowe, the director of Behavioral Health for OSF Healthcare, making a habit of focusing on the positives in your life can offer great benefits to your mental health.

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Cheryl Crowe, Director of Behavioral Health for OSF Healthcare

“There’s health benefits to gratitude, certainly. It puts us in a better, positive state. It really builds that resilience. It’s just a tool we can use to focus on the good things and the blessings, and I think when we do that we just stay in a very positive state of mind, which is important for all of us.” :20

Taking a few moments to reflect on gratitude can help you find meaning in small but enjoyable moments, like a great cup of coffee or a fun conversation with a coworker.

Crowe says it is easy to get bogged down in the day-to-day grind, but choosing to be grateful can help boost a person’s mood. She adds, gratitude can also be contagious.

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Cheryl Crowe, Director of Behavioral Health for OSF Healthcare

“When we get stuck in a negative place we tend to bring people to us who are also very stuck, and this is an opportunity to really not only help them share a different message, but to have a different experience.” :12

Crowe warns that gratitude takes practice, and suggests starting with approaches like saying thank you to people who may not expect it, or writing down a few things each day that make you grateful.

She also says that one act of gratitude can cause a ripple effect, impacting someone’s life in ways beyond measure.

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Cheryl Crowe, Director of Behavioral Health for OSF Healthcare

“This is an important topic because there are so many people who are lonely and in need, and we are seeing that impact things like suicide rates and rates of depression. We have an opportunity when we practice gratitude to share our experiences and to share that joy and really reach out to people who may need us, and need more than we need at that moment, and I think this is our opportunity to do that, and be grateful for what gifts we can share.” :30

When gratitude is hard to come by, there is help available. OSF HealthCare has a robust library of mental health resources that can assist you in finding the help you need.

OSF HealthCare also provides a digital tool called SilverCloud, which assists people in managing anxiety, depression, stress, or a combination of anxiety and depression. SilverCloud is free to access for adults – even those who are not current OSF HealthCare patients.

Visit osfhealthcare.org/mental-health to access more information or to get started with SilverCloud.