



CULTURAL COMPETENCY UPDATE

...a newsletter to address cultural issues that enable us to effectively work in cross cultural situations.

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Improving Your Well-being with an Attitude of Gratitude

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Improving Your Well-Being with an Attitude of Gratitude 1/2

BHRS Cultural Competence Oversight Committee meets on the 2nd Monday of each month from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in the Redwood Room, 800 Scenic Drive



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When I was growing up, I remember my mother saying “there is no use crying over spilt milk”, “eat everything on your plate because there are starving children in India”, and “count your blessings”. I thought these saying were mottos without much validity until recently when I read some research on gratitude.

According to research psychologists, Dr. Robert A. Emmons of the University of California, (Davis), and Dr. Michael E. McCullough of the University of Miami, the act of counting one’s blessings can increase positive emotions, improve health, and build strong relationships.(2003) One group of participants in a 10 week study, who wrote about gratitude were more optimistic and felt better about their lives than a second group who wrote about daily irritations, and a third group who wrote about events. Emmons and McCullough also suggest that gratitude strengthens the immune system, lowers blood pressure, reduces symptoms of illness, and makes us less bothered by aches and pains.

Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman, a research psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania, asked participants in his study to write a letter of gratitude to someone who had never been properly thanked for his or her kindness. (2011) These participants immediately exhibited a huge increase in happiness scores. This impact was greater than that from any other intervention, and the benefits lasted for a month. A study, by N.M Lambert (2010) looked at how gratitude can improve relationships. Individuals who took time to express gratitude for their partner not only felt more positive toward the other person but also felt more comfortable expressing concerns about their relationship.

In her book titled, The How of Happiness, (2008) Sonja Lyubomirsky identifies eight reasons for cultivating an “attitude of gratitude”. Expressing gratitude helps us focus on positive thinking rather than dwelling on our failures or disappointments. It can increase one’s self-worth and self esteem, and it can be an adaptive coping method for stress and trauma. According to research studies, traumatic memories for people who regularly practice gratitude are less likely to surface and are less intense. Gratitude can build a reserve of psychological, social, and spiritual resources to call upon during



There is
always
SOMETHING
for which
to be
Thankful

times of crisis. (Fredrickson, 1998) Expressing gratitude can also help people who are experiencing a loss or chronic illnesses adjust and stay focused on the positives in their lives. People who regularly express gratitude experience greater connection with others which in turn can further strengthen those relationships. “Gratitude also helps people connect to something larger than themselves as individuals — whether to other people, nature, or a higher power.” (Harvard Medical Letter, 2011) Finally, appreciating what you have can decrease negative emotions such as jealousy, envy, or anger. Gratitude helps people refocus on what they have instead of what they lack. Thus, those

who regularly practice gratitude can experience more contentment and happiness in their lives. People can express gratitude for past blessings, the present, and the future. Thus gratitude is a quality that individuals can successfully cultivate. So if you are intrigued by these interesting results, you might want to practice counting your blessing and see for yourself if “an attitude of gratitude” improves your well-being.

Here are a few ways to cultivate an “attitude of gratitude”, identified in the Harvard article *In Praise of Gratitude*. (2011)

Write a thank-you note. You can make yourself happier and nurture your relationship with another person by writing a thank-you letter expressing your enjoyment and appreciation of that person's impact on your life. Send it; or better yet, deliver it in person and read it aloud. Make a habit of sending at least one letter of gratitude a month. Once in a while, write one to yourself.

Thank someone mentally. No time to write? It may help just to think about someone who has done something nice for you, and mentally thank the individual.

Keep a gratitude journal. Make it a habit to write down or share with a loved one your thoughts about the gifts that you received that day.

Identify a gratitude partner. Find a partner with whom you can share your blessings with or who will encourage you if you lose motivation.

Count your blessings. Pick a time every week to sit down and write about your blessings. Reflect on what went right or what you are grateful for. Sometimes it helps to pick a number — such as three to five things — that you will identify each week. As you write, be specific and think about the sensations that you felt when something good happened to you.

Pray. People who are religious can use prayer to cultivate gratitude.



Highlights of October CCOC Meeting



- * The committee had a “Taste of Culture” potluck. Members brought in food from their culture to share with everyone and explained what it was.
- * Ruben proposed a name change for the committee, Cultural Competency Equity and Social Justice Committee. Ruben asked the committee for feedback to be discussed in February's meeting.
- * Madelyn shared the history of the Cultural Competency Plan and the most recent request by the State to update the data on the plan. She also presented the CLAS (Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services) standards as a framework for a new Cultural Competency Plan.
- * Ruben Imperial shared a PowerPoint presentation about the community capacity efforts at communities such as Grayson and other communities. The PowerPoint will be posted on the Intranet/Extranet.

If you have questions or suggestions regarding Cultural Competency, please forward them by e-mail to:

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