In Praise of Gratitude

The Thanksgiving holiday began, as the name implies, when the colonists gave thanks for their survival and for a good harvest. So perhaps November is a good time to review the mental health benefits of gratitude — and to consider some advice about how to cultivate this state of mind.

The word gratitude is derived from the Latin word gratia, which means grace, graciousness, or gratefulness (depending on the context). In some ways gratitude encompasses all of these meanings. Gratitude is a thankful appreciation for what an individual receives, whether tangible or intangible. With gratitude, people acknowledge the goodness in their lives. In the process, people usually recognize that the source of that goodness lies at least partially outside themselves. As a result, gratitude also helps people connect to something larger than themselves as individuals — whether to other people, nature, or a higher power.

In positive psychology research, gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships.

People feel and express gratitude in multiple ways. They can apply it to the past (retrieving positive memories and being thankful for elements of childhood or past blessings), the present (not taking good fortune for granted as it comes), and the future (maintaining a hopeful and optimistic attitude). Regardless of the inherent or current level of someone’s gratitude, it’s a quality that individuals can successfully cultivate further.

Here are some ways to cultivate gratitude on a regular basis.

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 and read it in person if possible. Make a habit of sending at least one gratitude letter a month. Once in a while, write one to yourself.

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

Count your blessings. Pick a time every week to sit down and write about your blessings — reflecting 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 you felt when something good happened to you.

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

Meditate. Mindfulness meditation involves focusing on the present moment without judgment. Although people often focus on a word or phrase (such as "peace"), it is also possible to focus on what you’re grateful for (the warmth of the sun, a pleasant sound, etc.).

Source: Harvard Health
Healthy Cooking: Almond Butter Apple Baked Oatmeal Cups

**Ingredients:**
- 1/2 cup applesauce
- 1/2 natural almond butter (or peanut butter)
- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 cup maple syrup
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup milk of your choice
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp. allspice
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 apple, diced

**Directions:**
1. Preheat oven to 350F. Line a muffin tin with muffin liners, and spray with nonstick cooking spray.
2. In a medium bowl, mix together applesauce, almond butter, eggs, maple syrup, vanilla, and milk until smooth.
4. Evenly distribute the batter between the cups (about 12), and bake for 25-30 minutes or until golden brown. Feel free to eat warm or cold.

Yo U R Compliance Connection—Conflicts of Interest

with Kris Henderson, Director of Compliance and Title IX Coordinator

So what is a conflict of interest? Let’s take a look at a situation to help explain what a conflict of interest looks like and how to avoid it.

In your position, you have been asked to have a recording of an important meeting transcribed as quickly as possible. You know you will not have time to do it yourself so you decide to reach out to a transcription service. You know your uncle has a transcription business and you have heard he does a great job. You contact him for the work and pay the invoice with your University issued p-card.

Is that ok? Does it feel awkward?

The University’s [Conflict of Interest](#) policy can help us answer those questions.

The Conflict of Interest policy is designed to ensure that decisions relating to the University are made in an impartial manner, considering only the best interest of the University. The policy provides us with guidelines that help with many different situations including our example above.

The University considers a conflict of interest to arise when:

- There are dual or multiple interests or loyalties, or the potential there for, that may inhibit the exercise of objective or impartial judgment in furtherance of the mission and objectives of the University or its Affiliates; or

- A person in a position of authority over the University or its Affiliates may benefit financially from a decision he or she could make in such a capacity, including indirect benefits such as to Family Members or businesses with which the person is closely associated.

In either situation, the policy requires the employee to disclose the potential conflict to their supervisor.

In our example, the hiring of your uncle’s business could certainly appear to be a conflict of interest as a family member is benefiting from the transaction. The best thing to do in that situation would be to contact your supervisor and let them know of the potential conflict. This allows for a mutual decision on the choice of your uncle’s business and whether it is the best choice based on quality and cost effectiveness.

Questions on potential conflicts of interest? Contact the Procurement Office or the Compliance Office for help.

Keep a Look Out!

November 4-8 is National Ethics and Compliance Week. Stay tuned to Spiderbytes and the [Compliance website](#) for more information on games and give-aways as the campus celebrates this important week.
Educational Corner: Protecting Your Skin

People say that beauty’s only skin deep; it’s what’s on the “inside” that counts. Our insides are certainly important, but skin is your first layer of defense against the outside world. Skin can also give important clues to your overall health. Learn to take good care of your skin, so your skin can keep taking good care of you.

Skin protects your body in many ways. “The skin provides a barrier to protect the body from invasion by bacteria and other possible environmental hazards that can be dangerous for human health,” says NIH dermatologist Dr. Heidi Kong.

Skin plays other roles, too. It contains nerve endings that let you feel when an object is too hot or sharp, so you can quickly pull away. Sweat glands and tiny blood vessels in your skin help to control your body temperature. And cells in your skin turn sunlight into vitamin D, which is important for healthy bones.

Skin can also alert you to a health problem. A red, itchy rash might signal allergies or infections, and a red “butterfly” rash on your face might be a sign of lupus. A yellow tint might indicate liver disease. And dark or unusual moles might be a warning sign of skin cancer. Be on the lookout for unexpected changes to your skin, and talk with your doctor if you have concerns.

Your skin can become too dry if you don’t drink enough fluids or spend too much time in sunny or dry conditions. “While washing hands is important for good hygiene, washing your hands too much can also lead to dry skin,” Kong says, especially if you wash with hot water and harsh soaps. To treat dry skin, use moisturizing creams or lotions, and use warm instead of hot water when you bathe and wash your hands. You can also try using a humidifier to make the air in your home less dry.

The sun can damage your skin as well. Sunlight contains ultraviolet (UV) light that causes sunburn and makes your skin age faster, leading to more wrinkles as you get older. “There’s a strong link between UV exposure and skin cancer,” Kong adds. So protect your skin from the sun. Wear hats and other protective clothing, use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30, and restrict your time in the sun during the late morning and early afternoon hours, when sunlight is strongest.

Many skin researchers like Kong are studying the skin’s microbiome—the bacteria and other microscopic organisms that live on your skin. Some of these microbes can be helpful. Evidence suggests that they boost the body’s infection-fighting immune system and help keep you healthy. “But there are some skin diseases with known associations with certain microbes,” says Kong. “We’re trying to understand how those microbes differ between healthy people and people with skin diseases.” In the long run, scientists would like to find ways to support healthy skin microbes while reducing harmful ones.

Source: News in Health (NIH)
Good nutrition is essential for a strong immune system, which helps protect you from seasonal illnesses such as the flu. Help boost your immune system by including these nutrients in your diet.

**Protein.** Eat a variety of lean protein foods which is part of your body’s defense mechanism. Include foods such as seafood, lean meat, chicken, turkey, eggs, beans, nuts, seeds, and nut butters.

**Vitamin A** helps protect your skin and tissues from infection. Include foods such as sweet potatoes, carrots, kale, spinach, red bell peppers, apricots, and eggs into your diet.

**Vitamin C** helps stimulate the formation of antibodies therefore boosting your immune system. Include citrus fruits (oranges, grapefruit, red peppers, strawberries) into your diet.

**Vitamin E** neutralizes free radicals and may improve immune function. Foods such as fortified cereal, sunflower seeds, almonds, hazelnuts and peanut butter are good sources of vitamin E.

**Zinc** helps your immune system work properly. Foods such as lean meat, chicken, turkey, seafood, milk, whole grains, beans, seeds and nuts are all good sources of zinc.

Make sure you include these nutrients into your day. Your plate should consist of whole grains, lean proteins, healthy fats and a variety of fruits and vegetables which will nourish your body and boost your immune system to fight off the seasonal illnesses.