



Blair Wellness

Hybrid Edition



Photo Credit: Katie Miller

Harvest Gratitude

It takes work, but there are things to feel good about in these challenging times.

It's been a rollercoaster of emotions since we unexpectedly began the adventure of virtual learning and faced the unknown of the pandemic last Spring. It's been a challenge for all of us, just it different ways. And while 'All in All Together' might feel a bit played out at this point, it's TRUE! We've made progress as a community— finding creative ways to connect, learn, and care for one another in these trying times. And while there are still challenges to work through, it starts with appreciating the good, even when we know where it could be better. And YES, positivity can absolutely be toxic, but only when we ignore or deny the existence of challenges. So, we are encouraging everyone to take a hard look at the resilience, perseverance, happy moments... all while acknowledging that this year has been hard. We didn't have a say in how the negative vibes of 2020 came in, but we do have control in how we move into 2021. So with a little over a month left, here are some tools for finding the good, reminders of where to look, and things to consider when supporting others and yourself.



Express your feelings of gratitude!

Write a letter to someone who's had a positive influence on you that you haven't properly thanked. Tell them what they did and how it impacted you.



Faculty kids enjoying a fall favorite, Halloween!

Spend less energy focusing on what's different and more on making the moments you have meaningful. [Click HERE](#) for new ways to gather and celebrate.

POSITIVELY TOXIC

Good vibes only! Don't worry, be happy! Don't think about it, stay positive! It could be worse. – Sound familiar?

What you say to a person in struggle matters. These kind of statements often aren't said with mal-intent, but they translate to "your feelings make me uncomfortable" and shut the person down. Instead try statements like these:

- "This is really hard, I'm thinking of you."
- "Describe what you're feeling, I'm listening."
- "You seem stressed, is there anything I can do?"
- "I'm here for you, both with the good and the bad."

Getting out of a "stuck" mood

Words of wisdom from Mrs. Merrifield

Tips for seeing "the good" alongside "the bad" and finding a balanced perspective.

Ever find yourself feeling stuck in a negative mood or thought pattern around a particular situation or event?

We all land there at times and it's completely normal.

Why? Because our brains are evolutionally wired to focus more on the negative as a way to protect ourselves from perceived threats to our safety. It's called negativity bias.

Negative experiences impact our brains more greatly than positive ones and they tend to stick around.

Common signs include:

Personalizing everything---this always happens TO ME!

Pervasive thinking---it's ALL bad!

Permanent mindset---This situation will NEVER change!

So...how do we get unstuck?

I've found two strategies that help me reframe my thinking and keep moving forward.

The first is a simple **gratitude practice**. Every morning (almost) before I leave my house to go to my classroom, I sit down with a hot cup of my favorite coffee and I write three things in my journal that I am grateful for. Sometimes those things are really big--like when my brother came all the way from the West Coast to take care of me after my knee replacement surgery. But sometimes those things are much smaller, like remembering the little gift that Mrs. Evans gave me when I moved back into the neighborhood this past summer or being thankful for the artsy note card that I just received in the mail from one of last year's seniors. Some days it's just the soothing aroma and taste of the coffee! I love this practice because it reminds me of the good and helps put my life into perspective. No, life isn't always easy, but it's usually a lot better than I think!

The second thing I do when I'm up against a tough situation and find myself stuck in what I call "stinking thing" is **take a moment to breathe and step out of my own head**. Instead of being self-absorbed, I try to look at myself from the outside in, without judgment, and get curious about what I notice. What am I actually feeling right now? What am I trying not to feel? And finally, what might this seemingly negative situation be trying to teach me?

I have found much Truth in this quote:

What we resist will persist; what we learn to befriend, we will transcend.

So, if you practice gratitude and get curious about yourself, you may be surprised at just how much your perspective changes!

Stay Grounded

Feeling Overwhelmed with Everything Going On?

Grounding is all about staying present in the moment, helping calm an anxious mind. Try this technique to help get you re-focused using your senses:

- What are 5 things you can see?
- What are 4 things you can feel?
- What are 3 things you can hear?
- What are 2 things you can smell?
- What is 1 thing you can taste?

Senior Perspectives

What moments and people have you been grateful for this fall?



Photo: Emma Swirbul

"Sitting on Fortunato's office porch with my friends on a Saturday afternoon for 4 hours talking about such a wide range of topics. The conversation flowed so well and I'm grateful to have such amazing friends in my life."

"The Senior Sunrise"



Photo: Dylan Zhang

"Mr. Molteni and Mr. Mantegna not only guide me academically but I feel as though they genuinely care about me as a person and my family. They are like my family at Blair and they always have my back. I don't know what I'm going to do at college without them."

"I'm extremely grateful to my friends, the boys basketball team, and my advisor, Mamu. They've made my senior year memorable, never failed to lighten up my days during this stressful period of time."



Photo: Mr. Thomas



Photo: Mr. Trish

"My favorite moment this fall was running around to every girls dorm on campus with the senior boys in boxers and ties. It was really cold, but we were all in it together (and sprinting the whole way) so it didn't feel like it. It was a great time."

"The pep rally and bonfire with the torch parade"



Photo: Mr. Trish

"Our victory on Peddie Day and the preceding pep rally were both highlights for me this fall. I had a really fun time performing with my team in the pep rally and watching the other skits, and despite COVID regulations, my enjoyment of the performances was not deterred. Of course, the long-awaited victory against Peddie was also really fun and having a decent sized crowd actually come out to watch a cross country race made my day."

"Everybody that has been around to support me, especially Mrs. Thomas, Ms. D, Mr. Mantegna, and Ms. Shaw. They've all helped me get back on track during a stressful fall."

WHAT YOU BRING TO THE TABLE

Relationships are complicated which can make family gatherings tough, especially with all that is going on in the world. Are there certain conversations that become an automatic argument with your family? Or do you feel like you struggle to hear some different perspectives around the topics being discussed? Maybe you won't have the big family gathering altogether this year due to the pandemic, but just in case here are some tips to help you take care of yourself:



1. Practice "I" statements - Ex. "I feel uncomfortable when people joke about ___."

This tends to work better than "you" statements (like "you're so rude, you always joke about ___") which leaves others feeling like they're being blamed or labeled as "bad". If someone is feeling defensive, they're less likely to hear your perspective. Approaching these difficult conversations from how you feel will hopefully keep their guard down so you can be heard.

2. Pay attention to defense mechanisms (yours and theirs)

We're talking passive aggression, projection (putting one's own struggles onto others), introjection (internalizing comments), and regression (being more childlike). Figure out what you tend to do so you can be more thoughtful and less reactive. Also keep in mind that many people fall into these patterns, as it can help you to be more patient with your family.

3. Look for what you have in common

There are plenty of topics that might have you biting your tongue, especially if there are divided views in your family. There are plenty of things to talk about but we suggest starting with what you have in common, family history. Funny childhood stories? How your parents met? Look at it as an opportunity to learn more about your family.

4. Short term avoidance

We'd encourage you not to do this long term, but we know there is a time and place for it. So, if you know interactions with Uncle Bob are tough for you, and you only see him once a year, find ways that are socially acceptable to avoid or limit your contact with him- offer to help cook, play with the children at the gathering, etc.

5. Practice mindfulness

Mrs. Merifield gave some great tips for this! The 5 senses activity, guided meditation, and deep breathing are other strategies.

RACE TO GIVE THANKS

A note from
Sofia Ciminello:



Why Hunger is a nonprofit organization that works to provide food insecure individuals across the country with nutritious food. This Thanksgiving, Why Hunger is running a virtual fundraiser called the Race to Give Thanks. The goal of the race is to run, walk or bike 5.4 miles to fundraise for and stand in solidarity with the 54 million Americans struggling to feed their families. All funds raised will be used to support those struggling and supply them with food until they are able to provide for themselves. While the Blair community wouldn't be able to complete the race together since it takes place on Thanksgiving Day, we would be able to connect with each other through the app to support and track each other's progress. People can pledge money for every mile someone completes and if they're not interested in participating you can make an upfront donation.

[Click Here to sign up!](#)

What the health?!

Whether you're driving or flying, here are some tips to keep you healthy while traveling!

- **First, make sure you have the appropriate supplies!:** Hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes, masks (yes, plural!! In case one gets wet or dirty). Also, bring a plastic bag that you can put dirty ones in until you can wash them.
- **Wear a mask** (covering your mouth and NOSE!!) in public settings, including on forms of transportation.
- Avoid close contact by **staying at least 6ft apart** from anyone who is not in your household.
- **Wash your hands often or use hand sanitizer** (at least 60% alcohol).
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.**
- **Avoid touching surfaces.**
- **Look at these CDC recommendations specific to the type of transportation you'll be taking!**

Mrs. Thomas: thomaa@blair.edu

Ms. Jimenez: jjimenm@blair.edu