Santa Paula Unified School District

Mental Health Matters

November 2025

Gratitude and Mental Health

What Is Gratitude?

Gratitude is the recognition and appreciation of kindness, goodness, or positive aspects in one's life. It is more than saying "thank you," it's an intentional mindset that strengthens emotional and social wellbeing. It involves consciously acknowledging the good in one's life and recognizing that it often comes from outside oneself.

Key Psychological and Emotional Benefits

Research in psychology and neuroscience demonstrates that gratitude is associated with multiple indicators of positive mental health and life satisfaction.

- **Boosts Happiness:** A single act of gratitude can increase happiness by up to 10%.
- **Reduces Depression Symptoms:** Studies show a 35% decrease in depressive symptoms following consistent gratitude practice.
- **Strengthens Relationships:** Expressing appreciation builds empathy, trust, and stronger connections.
- **Improves Sleep:** Focusing on positive thoughts before bed can enhance sleep quality and relaxation.
- **Builds Resilience:** Helps individuals find meaning and hope even during difficult times.

Protective Factors and Mental Health

According to the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) curriculum, gratitude functions as a *protective factor,* a behavior or condition that lowers the likelihood of negative mental health outcomes. By promoting perspective-taking, self-reflection, and emotional regulation, gratitude can help buffer the effects of stress, anxiety, and depressive thinking.

Neuroscientific Insights

Did you know that practicing gratitude can actually change how the brain works? Studies using brain imaging reveal that feelings of gratitude activate areas of the brain that release dopamine and serotonin, the "feeling good" chemicals that enhance mood and overall well-being. Over time, these positive brain patterns can grow stronger, helping build resilience, nurture optimism, and support a healthier approach to life's challenges.

OPTUM

Need Mental Health Support?

OPTUM EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP) OFFERS **FREE CONFIDENTIAL HELP**

Call toll-free **888-444-8624** any time
OR
Go to **www.liveandworkwell.com** and browse as a guest using code **CSEBO**

mental health matters

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

Connections to Wellbeing

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) identifies eight dimensions of wellbeing: emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, and spiritual. Gratitude supports these dimensions by:

- Enhancing emotional stability and stress management.
- Promoting social connectedness and trust.
- Encouraging mindfulness and appreciation of one's environment.
- Reinforcing meaning, purpose, and spiritual fulfillment.

Simple Ways to Practice Gratitude

- Keep a gratitude journal or daily reflection list.
- Verbally express appreciation to others.
- Celebrate small accomplishments, not just major milestones.
- Pause during the day to notice something positive.
- Engage students or colleagues in gratitude activities, such as "thank-you walls" or reflection circles.

Important Considerations

While gratitude offers many benefits, it's important to remember that it is not a replacement for professional mental health support. It serves as one of many strategies that contribute to overall wellness.

Full articles found at:

https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2022/11/practicing-gratitude/

https://www.abundancetherapycenter.com/blog/the-psychological-benefits-of-gratitude-and-being-thankful

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Local and National Resources and Support

911 For Immediate Support
Ventura County Crisis Team (866) 998-2243 (24 hours)
Suicide Prevention Lines (24 Hours)

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** 988 or (800) 273-8255
- **Suicide Prevention Crisis Line** (877) 727-4747
- **National Hope line Network** (800) SUICIDE or (800) 784-2433
- **California Youth Crisis Line** (800) 843- 5200 –24 hours, bilingual
- **TEEN LINE** (310) 855-4673 or text TEEN to 839863 – a teen-to-teen hotline with community outreach services, from 6pm-10pm PST daily. Text, email, and message board also available, with limited hours—visit http://teenlineonline.org for more information.
- **The Trevor Project** (866) 488-7386 – a 24-hour crisis line that provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) young people ages 13-24. Text and chat also available, with limited hours—visit www.thetrevorproject.org for more information.

In case of an Emergency:

911 For Immediate Support
Ventura County Crisis Team
(866) 998-2243 (24hrs)