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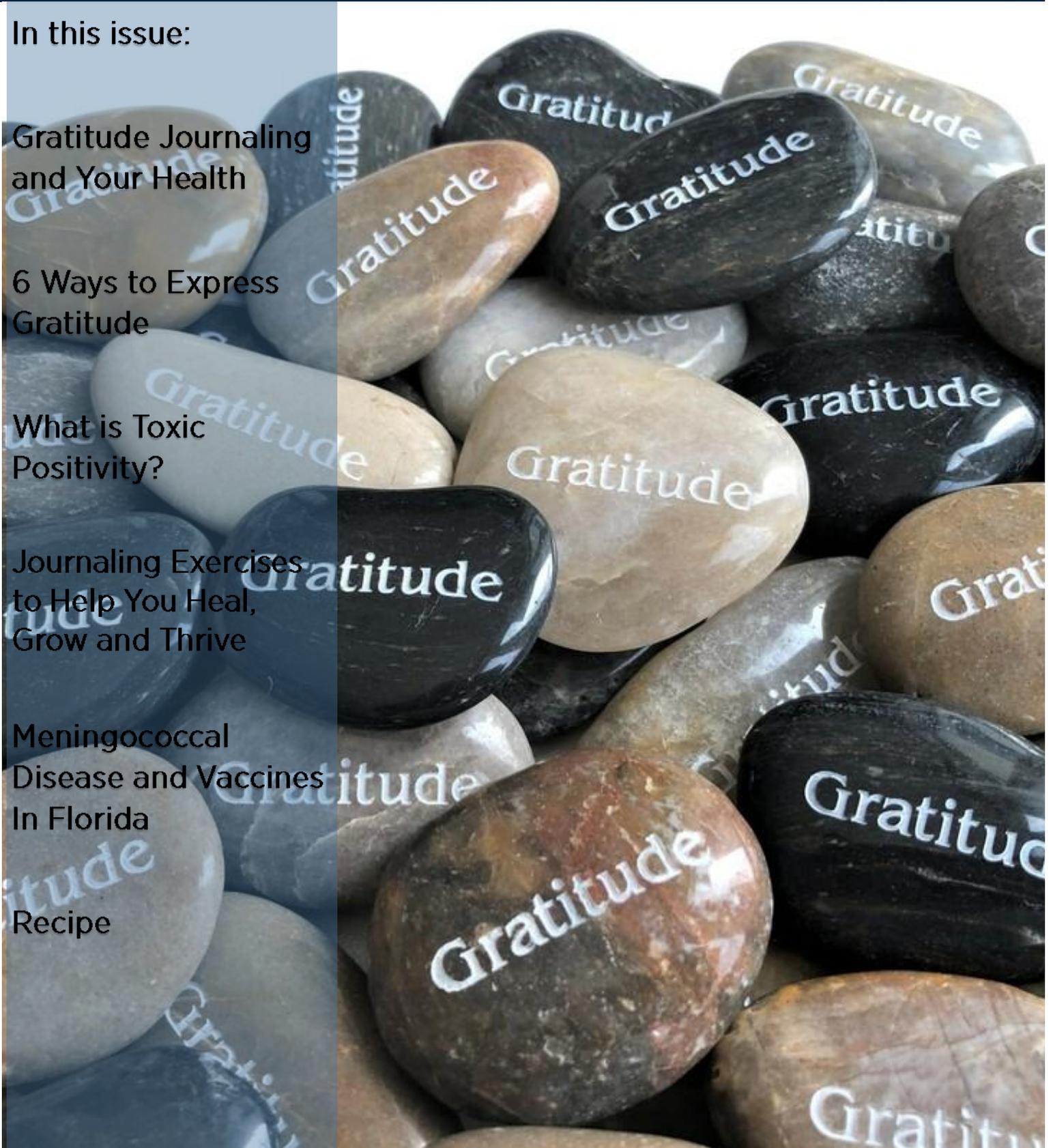
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Gratitude Journaling and Your Health

Gratitude journals have become popular in recent years. This might be due, at least in part, to the wealth of research showing a beneficial link between journaling and health.

Researchers define gratitude journaling as “writing on a regular basis about things, people, and events one feels explicitly grateful for.” The format isn’t as important as the consistency of practice.

Here are just a few ways gratitude journaling¹ can support your wellbeing:

Improved Sleep

Gratitude journaling has been associated with better sleep. In one study², researchers found that journaling for two weeks improved sleep quality. If you struggle with falling or staying asleep, journaling about what you are thankful for may be a helpful strategy.

Reduced Inflammation

Another study³ found a link between gratitude journaling and reduced biomarkers for stress and inflammation. This is important because inflammation has been tied to an increased risk for heart disease and other chronic conditions.

Reduced Aggression

Keeping a journal may also help reduce aggression related to hurt feelings. Some research suggests that gratitude journaling is protective against the kind of emotional distress that often leads to aggressive reactions.⁴

Increased Optimism

Increased optimism has been tied to journaling as well. Focusing on what you are grateful for helps you see the positive aspects of your life more clearly.

Strengthened Relationships

There is also evidence that gratitude journaling can improve the quality of relationships. People who express gratitude frequently tend to feel more comfortable voicing concerns earlier in relationships. This helps resolve issues before they become a bigger problem.

In summary, numerous studies have shown that gratitude journaling has the potential to improve emotional wellbeing, quality of life, relationships, and overall life satisfaction. To better support your wellbeing – and the wellbeing of the people you care about – express gratitude often.

1. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2019.1651888>

2. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105315572455>

3. <https://doi.org/10.1097/PSY.0000000000000316>

4. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550611416675>



6 Ways to Express Gratitude

Gratitude is an expression of appreciation. It is an acknowledgment of kindness that can be an extremely powerful form of positive reinforcement.

It has been described as an emotion, a temporary feeling⁵, and a personality trait, but some believe it to be much more than that. Gratitude is one of the most effective tools for building successful teams and organizations. To cultivate a more collaborative culture in the workplace⁶, gratitude needs to play a central role.

Being grateful has also been associated⁷ with greater happiness and increased⁸ life satisfaction.

Here are some easy ways to express gratitude:

Say Thank You

Everyone likes to be acknowledged, and saying 'thank you' is one of the easiest ways to do so. This simple gesture can go a long way to building rapport and trust in relationships.

Write a Gratitude Letter

Thank you notes are another way to express gratitude. When you write a letter, be sure to include what the other person did to deserve your thanks.

Make a Gratitude Visit

If letter writing is not appropriate, consider making a face-to-face visit to express your gratitude in person.

Start a Gratitude Journal

The expression of gratitude does not always have to involve another person. Journaling offers a safe space for you to express your gratitude privately.



Give a Gift

Gift giving can also be a gesture of kindness. Similar to writing letters, whenever you give a gift, be sure to include a note explaining the reason behind it.

Do a Random Act of Kindness

If the source of your gratitude is not specific to a single person, you could opt to do a random act of kindness to brighten someone else's day instead.

The expression of gratitude does not have to be complicated. A few thoughtful words or actions are simple ways to show others how much you appreciate them.

5. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/gratitude>

6. <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/>

7. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>

8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02480>



What is Toxic Positivity?

Most people understand the value of maintaining a positive mindset, but the belief that we should always be positive has many mental health experts raising red flags.

The term 'toxic positivity' refers to minimizing⁹, denying, or invalidating negative feelings. Psychologists describe¹⁰ it as "the excessive and ineffective over-generalization of a happy, optimistic state across all situations."

Unfortunately, positivity is not as effective as many believe. When we suppress or ignore negative feelings, they can intensify. That is why mental health experts often advise against adopting a "good vibes only" sentiment, which can be damaging to your relationships and to your wellbeing.

Here are a few tips to help you avoid toxic positivity.

Acknowledge All Emotions

Pretending everything is okay when life feels hard only prolongs negative emotions. When you allow all emotions to exist without judgment, you can process them more easily and focus your efforts on solutions.

Listen Without Fixing

Most of us have a natural tendency to want to help others, whether it be through advice giving or attempting to remedy the situation directly. The problem with this approach is that it communicates to the other person that you do not believe they are capable of solving the problem on their own. When someone you care about comes to you with a problem, focus on listening rather than fixing.



Ask Questions

Asking questions is a good way to demonstrate active listening. The next time a friend comes to you with a problem, try asking them this question: "What can I do that would be the most helpful for you right now?" Questions encourage honest dialogue and the open expression of emotions, even the negative ones.

Moving away from toxic positivity and toward a healthier form of positivity can make all the difference in your personal relationships.

9. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-man-cave/201908/toxic-positivity-dont-always-look-the-bright-side>

10. <https://thepsychologygroup.com/toxic-positivity/>



Journaling Exercises to Help You Heal, Grow and Thrive

Journaling is a way of going on a retreat without leaving your home.

[Journaling](#) is not only for people in [pain](#), but it is also a self-care technique for those who are [caring for others](#). Writing down your thoughts and experiences can help you make sense of your concerns and it can help create order out of any chaos.

By documenting your thoughts, you can go back and track your progress. When you make journaling part of your regular routine, you can read what you've written and see how much progress you've made on your journey. There are proven physical and mental benefits to journaling. Maintaining a [gratitude](#) journal relieves [stress](#) and exploring what makes you happy is a powerful reminder of the good in your life.

Explore Your Strengths and Weaknesses

Make a list of three qualities you have that you consider weaknesses, then explore how these so-called weaknesses might be recast as strengths. For instance, if you believe micromanagement is a weakness of yours, it could also mean that you're organized and responsible. Once you determine the strength on the flip side of that quality, write about a time when you used that quality in a positive way. If you can't think of a recent example, write something aspirational (how you might use this quality positively in the future).

Define Your Intentions

List five qualities of your [personality](#) or your outlook that you think defines you. Write just one word/ phrase/or sentence for each—not a summary of your whole life. Don't overthink. What rises to the surface as important now? You can even do this prompt periodically to see how the list changes. Then expand on the qualities, writing about each of those aspects and how they positively pertain to you.

Practice Gratitude

List five things that you're grateful for — people, positive experiences (past or current), places, material items — then expand on each one, describing it/him/her in detail, perhaps at a particular moment in time.

Make Time for Joy

List three activities that bring you joy. Expand on each activity, describing a recent time when you fully engaged in it. If you're finding it challenging to engage in these activities as often as you'd like or need then explore strategies for working them into your schedule more often.

Create a Balance

List two things you tend to say yes to or have said yes to recently and two things you tend to say no to or have said no to recently. What was good self-care and what wasn't? For example, saying yes can be a way of embracing an opportunity and engaging with the world (good self-care), but it can also be a way of spreading yourself too thin. Saying no can help you maintain healthy boundaries and manage your time (good self-care), but it can also isolate you and cause you to miss opportunities. This awareness can help you prioritize, and determine the value of things and what's truly important to you

April 8, 2022

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN BROWARD COUNTY ADVISES ON MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE AND VACCINES IN FLORIDA

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Tallahassee, Fla. – The Florida Department of Health (FDOH) is responding to an outbreak of meningococcal disease in Florida. **However, it can be prevented and treated. Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect against meningococcal disease.**

Thus far, the number of cases identified in 2022 surpasses the 5-year average of meningococcal disease cases in Florida. FDOH epidemiologists are investigating each case as well as contacting people with potential or direct exposure to known cases to provide them with information and treatment options.

The following groups should consider vaccination with a meningococcal conjugate (MenACWY) vaccine during this outbreak:

- College and university students;
- Immunocompromised individuals;
- People living with HIV;
- Male same sex relationships;
- People in any groups listed above who received their MenACWY vaccine more than 5 years ago.

Find meningococcal vaccines, including the MenACWY vaccine, by contacting a health care provider, county health department, or pharmacy. FDOH Broward offers meningococcal vaccines. For more information, visit the FDOH Broward website at broward.floridahealth.gov or call 954-467-4705.

This is a serious disease caused by bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. Fortunately, these bacteria are not as contagious as germs that cause the common cold or flu. People do not catch the bacteria through casual contact or by breathing air where someone with meningococcal disease has been. It requires close contact over a period of time, or direct contact such as kissing or sharing drinks.

Early symptoms of the disease include fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, light sensitivity, confusion, and rash. Anyone who has been exposed or develops symptoms should be evaluated by a health care provider immediately. This is a rare but potentially devastating disease.

For more information about meningococcal disease, please visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](https://www.cdc.gov) or the [FDOH website](https://www.floridahealth.gov).



Peanut Butter Oatmeal Cookies with Chocolate Chips

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups old-fashioned or regular rolled oats
- ½ cup cane sugar* (may substitute coconut sugar)
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- 2 whole eggs
- ¼ cup unsalted butter, softened (may substitute coconut oil for dairy-free)
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup natural peanut butter, room temperature or heated slightly to achieve pourable consistency
- ¾ cup dark or semi-sweet chocolate chips

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line two sheet pans with parchment paper.
2. Combine the ingredients in a medium bowl, except for the chocolate chips. You can also use a stand-up mixer. Mix until well combined.
3. Fold in the chocolate chips.
4. If the dough is real sticky, let it sit for 5 minutes or place in the fridge.
5. With a small cookie scoop, scoop dough onto pans to make about 2 dozen cookie. With hands, slightly flatten each cookie dough mound to form a round cookie shape.
6. Bake for 10-15 minutes or until cookie centers are done and outsides are golden. Baking time will depend on the size of the cookies. Start with 10 minutes and add time as needed.
7. After removing from the oven, let the cookies set on pan for 10 minutes before transferring to a cooling rack.

Prep Time

10 Minutes

Cook Time

10 Minutes

Servings

30



Nutrition Facts

Calories	135
Fat	9g
Sodium	65mg
Carbohydrate	13g
Fiber	2g
Sugars	5g
Protein	4g

Source:

[Peanut Butter Oatmeal Cookies with Chocolate Chips - The Real Food Dietitians](#)



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