Success with Stress
Series:
The Gift of Gratitude

www.fsap.emory.edu
(404) 727-WELL

FSAP ... finding solutions to life’s challenges.
Objectives

✓ Increase awareness of research-based and practical aspects of gratitude and happiness.

✓ Learn how the recognition and expression of gratitude can improve emotional, physical, occupational, and relational health and well-being.

✓ Identify personalized ways to ‘embrace stress’ by applying gratitude practices in everyday life.
Gratitude is essentially the recognition of the unearned increments of value in one’s experience.

David Steindl-Rast
“Among all emotions, there is one which, more than any other, accounts for the presence or absence of stress in human relations: that is the feeling of gratitude.”

Dr. Hans Selye (“Father” of Stress Management from “The Stress of Life”, 1956)
Gratitude is NOT

- Appeasing
- Suppressing Feelings or Rationalizing Unhealthy Situations
- Controlling others
- Indebtedness
- Idealizing Others / Downplaying Yourself
- Giving to Receive
Common Hurdles to Gratitude

- Busy, Unaware
- Overvaluing Autonomy
- Negativity
- Fear of Negative Social Perceptions
- Passivity or Insecurity
- Social Comparison
- Unresolved Depression or Trauma
- Conduciveness of the Social Environment
1. Practicing gratitude can reduce excess Cortisol in your body by 23%, which helps decrease harmful strain on your brain and vital organs (Source: Emmons).

2. As a form of reaching out to others, gratitude can increase the amount of Oxytocin released in our body. This hormone acts as an anti-inflammatory for our heart, relaxes our blood vessels, and helps us embrace stress positively. (Source: McGonigal, http://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend?language=en).
Gratitude Reduces:
✓ Depression
✓ PTSD
✓ Conflict
✓ Social Isolation
✓ Blood Pressure
✓ Physical Pain
✓ Mistakes / Errors!

The Gift Unpackaged

The Act of Growing Gratitude

Two-Part Process

- Acknowledge something good
- Recognize source is (at least partially) outside oneself

Click on link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIQZZCFrslQ&app=desktop (Start at 5:50 – 8:40) to see an excerpt of a Pharrell Williams interview, for great description of gratitude.
Gratitude and Happiness

What Determines an Individual’s Level of Happiness?

- Genetics: 50%
- Our Choices: 40%
- Events Beyond Our Control: 10%

Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schlkade, 2005
Gratitude Practice Improves…

- Happiness
- Relationship Quality
- Perspective / Closure
- Sleep (Hrs & Quality)
- Performance & Career
- Energy / Exercise
- Physical Health / Cardio
- Commitment / Willpower
- Longevity!

- DAVID STEINDL-RAST

IT IS NOT JOY THAT MAKES US GRATEFUL

IT IS GRATITUDE THAT MAKES US JOYFUL.
Summary of Gratitude Benefits

Gratitude allows celebration in the present.  
Gratitude blocks toxic emotions like envy, resentment, regret, and depression.  
Grateful people are more stress resilient.  
Gratitude strengthens social ties and self-worth.  

Please click on this link and start at 4:09 - 9:25: 
https://www.ted.com/talks/louie_schwartzberg_nature_beauty_gratitude
Exploring Gratitude

Categories: People, Things, Successes, Character Strengths, Experiences / Lessons
3 Steps to Grateful Living

**Stop** – Create reminders to pause and breathe. Choose activities that factor in your schedule, interests, goals.

**Look** – Notice and savor what’s positive and possible; Enjoyment, appreciation, opportunity to learn/practice.

**Go!* – Express gratitude with specific words, warm gestures, acts of service, tokens, and/or quality time.

*Source: David Steindl-Rast, [https://www.ted.com/talks/david_steindl_rast_want_to_be_happy_be_grateful](https://www.ted.com/talks/david_steindl_rast_want_to_be_happy_be_grateful)
Gratitude Visit/Letter and Levels of Gratitude Practice

1. **Words of Recognition:**
   I appreciate your help on the project.

2. **What You Value:**
   I like the way you offer such thoughtful perspectives when we collaborate.

3. **Why It's Important to You:**
   It inspires me to give more of myself.
Given the “Levels of Gratitude Practice” on the previous slide and VIA signature strengths (see link and attached handout and links), think about one person you’d like to express gratitude towards; it could be someone in your personal or work life, past or present, someone you know very well or who you haven’t kept in touch with. Write them a brief note, call them, or visit them.
Gratitude Journaling

- Try for 2-3 months. Be specific. Diversify with different times, aspects, examples. Quality vs. Quantity!

- What you’re grateful for or went well, as well as related strengths in others that made it possible

- Consider including how you contributed / your strengths (See “VIA Signature Strengths” links at the end).

- Without dismissing the negative impact on you, identify strengths or opportunities that may have resulted from painful experience.
Ways to Stop, Look and Go

- Cup of Coffee Centering
- Commute and Transitions (Red Lights & Doors)
- Celebrate & Share Credit for Successes
- Random Acts of Kindness

- Gratitude Stroll
- Gratitude Preferences
- Media & Apps
- Strength Spotting
- Translate Problems into Opportunities
- Meal (Grace & Savoring)
- Bedtime Reflections

Source: 22 Gratitude Exercises That Will Change Your Life.  
http://daringtolivefully.com/gratitude-exercises
No Time?
Trade 5 Minutes of _ for Gratitude

- Excess / Negative Television / Media
- Social Comparison / Overthinking
- Excess Venting /Replaying of Negative Events
- Negative / Avoidant Coping (e.g., substance abuse, overeating, overspending, etc.)
Question: How much can making a small behavioral change lead to more meaningful emotional one? See the link on the next slide.
Something to Smile About

WHEN I'M IN A BAD PLACE, I THINK OF ALL THE THINGS I'M GRATEFUL FOR!

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU'RE IN A GOOD PLACE?

I WORRY.

Article: http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/isnt-what-i-expected/201207/try-some-smile-therapy
“Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.”

~ Melody Beattie
Closing Reflections

- What is one of your most grateful takeaway messages?

- What gratitude practice(s) do you plan on using to embrace stress? How will you stay accountable?

- Remember, FSAP is a resource all Emory employees and family members. We are grateful for opportunities to work with you!
References


The Power of Gratitude: https://www.ted.com/speakers/br_david_steindl_rast
https://www.ted.com/talks/david_steindl_rast_want_to_be_happy_be_grateful
https://www.ted.com/talks/louie_schwartzberg_nature_beauty_gratitude

Pharrell Williams from CBS’ Sunday Morning Interview: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIQZZCFrslQ&app=desktop

Mr. Holland’s Opus Final Scene (Beautiful Gratitude Expression and Receipt): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ng3I4vEN3Dk (3:30 – 5:55)

Wonderful Website with Grateful Inspiration from Monk Steindl-Rast (Led Gratitude Video exercise) : http://www.gratefulness.org/
VIA Signature Strengths Questionnaire: http://www.viacharacter.org/VIAINSTITUTE/Classification.aspx (overview) http://www.viacharacter.org/www/The-Survey (actual questionnaire)