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Welcome back from the holidays!

Hopefully you all found time to rest and recharge over the winter break. I want to take a moment to express gratitude for each and every one of you who show up day after day for our students, families and broader community. I also want to encourage everyone to [submit their favorite stress busting tip](https://www.heart.org/en/affiliates/from-teachers-for-teachers-share-your-tips-for-beating-stress) to the American Heart Association to be entered in a drawing for a **$25 Amazon gift card**.

Gratitude is more than a buzzword. It’s a habit and practice that may actually change your perception of well-being. This pandemic can feel overwhelming, it has brought so many changes and added a layer of worry to everyday life. Sometimes it feels like we just can’t catch a break. While this continued stress can make us feel negative and cynical, it’s important to try and find a semblance of balance. One thing that can help balance our natural negativity bias is practicing gratitude. Clinical trials indicate that the practice of gratitude can have dramatic and lasting effects in a person’s life. It can lower blood pressure and improve immune function. Grateful people engage in more exercise, have better dietary behaviors, are less likely to smoke and abuse alcohol and have higher rates of medication adherence. Being grateful is the gift that keeps on giving.

## Here’s a simple way to get started:

Write these down before you go to bed or share them around the dinner table. In just five minutes, you can practice gratitude from the heart.

### **1. Health: What did your body do for you today?**

Did you know you take about 8 million breaths a year? Your feet can take you up a mountain; your arms can hold someone you love. Take a minute to marvel at the finely tuned machinery of your body and thank yourself for the steps you take every day to keep it safe and healthy.

### **2. Eat: What did you feed your body to nourish yourself today?**

Was it an old favorite, something you made or something new and different? If you eat three meals a day, you’ll eat about a thousand meals this year! Take a minute to savor an especially yummy meal.

### **3. Activity: What did you do that you really enjoyed today?**

Did you give it your all when exercising today, or find a quiet moment while sitting in traffic to reflect? Take a minute to think back on one particularly awesome moment.

### **4. Relationship: Whom do you look forward to connecting with?**

Is it someone who sets your heart on fire, always has a smile for you, has your back or makes you laugh until you cry? Take a minute to smile as you think about this special person. Then make plans for a virtual meet-up.

### **5. Time: What are you doing right now?**

Every single day you wake up with 24 brand new hours. The past is history, the future is a mystery and today is a gift. Take a minute to be thankful for the gift of time, including any extra time you have right now for your family or yourself.

**Let’s do this and be Healthy for Good!**

Interested in learning more? Visit the [American Heart Association website](https://www.heart.org/en/affiliates/healthy-for-good-puget-sound-teachers) for the 21 Days of Gratitude Challenge and more tips to help you Be Well.

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