While you are waiting for us to start, perhaps you could send a quick text to someone important to you, to send a kind thought their way.

The Surprising Science of Gratitude

J. Bryan Sexton, PhD
Director
Duke Center for Healthcare Safety and Quality
Duke University Health System
twitter.com/dukehsq
While you are waiting for us to start, perhaps you could send a quick text to someone important to you, to send a kind thought their way.
2 links:

1 tool

1 hour cont ed
Burnout is associated with:

**Infections**

**Higher Standardized Mortality Ratios**

**Medication Errors**

**Lower Patient Satisfaction**
Burnout, at its core, is the impaired ability to experience positive emotion.
Joy
Gratitude
Serenity
Interest
Hope
Pride
Amusement
Inspiration
Awe
Love
What is the simplest, most effective thing I can do right now if I’m feeling burned out?
Gratitude

grat·i·tude
ˈgratəˌt(y)o͞ød/
noun
the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.

Robert A. Emmons, PhD
Professor of Psychology at UC Davis
Counting Blessings Versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life

Robert A. Emmons
University of California, Davis

Michael E. McCullough
University of Miami

The effect of a grateful outlook on psychological and physical well-being was examined. In Studies 1 and 2, participants were randomly assigned to 1 of 3 experimental conditions (hassles, gratitude listing, and either neutral life events or social comparison); they then kept weekly (Study 1) or daily (Study 2) records of their moods, coping behaviors, health behaviors, physical symptoms, and overall life appraisals. In a 3rd study, persons with neuromuscular disease were randomly assigned to either the gratitude condition or to a control condition. The gratitude-outlook groups exhibited heightened well-being across several, though not all, of the outcome measures across the 3 studies, relative to the comparison groups. The effect on positive affect appeared to be the most robust finding. Results suggest that a conscious focus on blessings may have emotional and interpersonal benefits.

Reflect on your present blessings, on which every man has many, not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.
—Charles Dickens (M. Dickens, 1897, p. 45)

The construct of gratitude has inspired considerable interest in the general public. The prevalence of books targeted to general audiences on the topic (Brethnach, 1996; Hay, 1996; Miller, 1995; Prager, 1998; Steinall Bart, 1996; Tommy 1999, Van Kooij, 1999; Van Kooij, 2000; Van Kooij, 2001; Wirz, 1995) has been treated as both basic and desirable aspects of human personality and social life. For example, gratitude is a highly prized human disposition in Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu thought (Carman & Streng, 1989). Indeed, the consensus among the world’s religious and ethical writers is that people are morally obligated to feel and express gratitude in response to received benefits. Despite such widespread exhortations, the con-
Positive psychology has flourished in the last 5 years. The authors review recent developments in the field, including books, meetings, courses, and conferences. They also discuss the newly created classification of character strengths and virtues, a positive complement to the various editions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (e.g., American Psychiatric Association, 1994), and present some cross-cultural findings that suggest a surprising ubiquity of strengths and virtues. Finally, the authors focus on psychological interventions that increase individual happiness. In a 6-group, random-assignment, placebo-controlled Internet study, the authors tested 5 purported happiness interventions and 1 plausible control exercise. They found that 3 of the interventions lastingly increased happiness and decreased depressive symptoms. Positive interventions can supplement traditional interventions that relieve suffering and may someday be the practical legacy of positive psychology.
The Gratitude Letter

Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005
I am grateful for.........
How to be grateful?

Like any positive emotion, it helps to be open, appreciative, curious, kind, and, above all, real and sincere.
At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.

—Albert Schweitzer
1875-1965; Physician, Philosopher, Theologian and Nobel Peace Prize Winner
Please use your mobile browser to go to:

bit.ly/grattool
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Figure 3: Study 2: Means and Standard Errors for Emotional Exhaustion, Subjective Happiness, and Work-life Balance across Assessment Points
Gratitude at Work: A Prospective Cohort Study of a Brief Well-being Intervention for Healthcare Workers

Kathryn C. Adair, PhD, Larissa G. Rodriguez-Homs, MBS, Paul J. Mosca, MD/PhD/MBA, J. Bryan Sexton, PhD
Time to complete: 5-7 minutes

- improvement in all three outcomes (ps < .001)
- At baseline, lower burnout (and SWB/WLB) were associated with greater third person plural in their letters (e.g., “we”)
- Lower happiness was associated with greater negative emotion words use (e.g., “hurt”)
- Using more words related to insight and cognitive processes (e.g., because of/due to/through this event) predicted greater reductions in burnout (all ps <.05).
Gratitude

Think of someone who has done something amazing for you; this person can be alive or no longer with us. This person contributed to your well-being in a big way.

Spend the next few minutes writing a brief note, telling this person what they did, how it impacted you, and what this says about them.

Be genuine, kind, and appreciative in your note.
My Gratitude Adjustment

A hundred times a day I remind myself that my inner and outer life depends on the labors of others, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving.

—Albert Einstein
What just happened...

The emotions associated with giving and receiving this letter are similar to the emotions following our greatest accomplishments.

As a result —

Our understanding of success expands to include accomplishments we have previously taken for granted, even for the recipient. (e.g., a struggling teacher who receives a letter from a grateful student recalibrates how successful she has really been)
"Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it."

— William Arthur Ward
What just happened...

Try doing this monthly or bimonthly, as part of a predictable routine

Benefits are powerful, but only last 4-6 weeks, so repeated use is encouraged
Don’t forget to make the call...
What next...

Use the break as a chance to make the call, or send a text that you would like to talk soon – but don’t say why
Next Month...

Enhancing Resilience: The Science and Practice of Gratitude

J. Bryan Sexton, PhD
Director, Patient Safety Center
Duke University Health System

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For continuing education credit:

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Monthly Resilience Webinar series:
- 1 hr cont ed credit (MD/RN/Other)
- 1 tool each month, Recorded, with Q&A

- **January** - Prevalence & Severity of Burnout: Workforce Resilience as Care Quality
- **February** - Enhancing Resilience: The Science and Practice of Gratitude
- **March** - Relationship Resilience: The Science of How Other People Matter
- **April** - Enhancing Resilience: Three Good Things
- **May** - Enhancing Resilience: Practicing Safe Stress and the Science of Sleep
- **June** - Psychological Safety: The Predictive Power of Feeling Supported When Things Go Wrong
- **July** - Science of Mindfulness
- **August** - Health Care Worker Resilience, Work Life Integration, and Burnout
- **September** - Collaboration vs. Dealing with Difficult Colleagues: Assessing, Understanding and Improving Teamwork in a Clinical Area Near You
- **October** - Science of Wow: Cultivating Awe and Wonder as a Resilience Strategy
- **November** - Positive WalkRounds: Leader Rounding to Identify What is Going Well – Links to Quality, Culture and Workforce Resilience
- **December** - Enhancing Resilience: Survival of the Kindest

www.hsq.dukehealth.org
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Next Month...

Measuring and Understanding Health Care Worker Resilience, Work-Life Integration, and Burnout

J. Bryan Sexton, PhD
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