

Gratitude in the Workplace

With increasing workplace demands, virtual connectivity, and pace of life, employees may feel overwhelmed and burned-out. These feelings have very practical consequences, including but not limited to reduced productivity, lower job satisfaction, and poorer customer service.¹ Expressing gratitude is an intentional practice that may help counteract reduce work-life stress.

How does gratitude positively impact mental health?

Expressing gratitude is an effective way to balance feelings of being overwhelmed, confused, and burned out. Gratitude can include showing appreciation toward ourselves, others, and circumstances that proved to be valuable and impactful.

- The expression of gratitude highlights to the receiver how their actions matter and have contributed to you. This helps to show that we are inter-dependent and what we do matters, as our actions impact each other.
- Expressing gratitude helps you become more mindful of the present moment. Mindfulness can decrease negative self-talk about past mistakes and future worries, and improve concentration, memory, decision-making, and overall mood.²
- Gratitude can help to reframe your focus from what isn't going well to what is going well, from what you don't have to what you have, and from resistance to accepting what is happening. The reframe can help to build resilience and enhance life satisfaction.
- Gratitude is also strongly tied to one of our core emotional needs – our desire for a meaningful life. Practicing gratitude creates a sense of satisfaction in our lives and in our work, which also positively affects work productivity.
- What you appreciate matters. Giving gratitude may help to improve relationships, reduce stress and loneliness, and help a person accept the current circumstances.³⁻⁵

What are ways to cultivate moments of gratitude at work?

Integrating acts of gratitude into management practices is a great way to create a mentally healthy culture within an organization. It is important to establish a cadence of behaviors, activities, and events around the practice of gratitude to sustain the positive benefits.

Below are a few ideas for inspiration.

Process ideas:

- Encourage employees to create regular team meeting activity and email communications that highlight how the actions of others impacted them and share gratitude.
- Encourage employees to remember to reflect on their accomplishments and give self-gratitude for their contributions.
- If your organization uses virtual communication tools, like Slack, create community gratitude or recognition channels where employees can share gratitude experiences during the workday.

Programs ideas:

- Develop organization-wide public and private recognition programs and platforms for employees to express gratitude to each other in written and visual format and consider incorporating forms of recognition.
- Encourage creative and non-monetized gift-giving between employees, including a gift of time, gift certificates for a future favor, an appreciation book, and others – to show gratitude.
- Ask leaders to periodically express gratitude towards employees to highlight their value.
- Set a meeting for *Gratitude Stories* to allow employees to share when another person impacted them and to give gratitude.
- Create a virtual team gratitude journal and revisit quarterly as a team.
- Start an organization-wide *Days of Gratitude Challenge*, where employees express gratitude for a set number of days.
- Consider starting a community gratitude graffiti project that provides gratitude kits to publicly display stories of gratitude within the organization.⁸

There are many creative ways to cultivate a culture of gratitude and appreciation. Your organization may also wish to reach out to employees for creative ideas to increase employee engagement and participation.

For more information on Gratitude and how to cultivate it at work, see these excellent resources below:

- How Gratitude Can Transform Your Workplace: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_gratitude_can_transform_your_workplace
- Five Ways to Cultivate Gratitude at Work: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five_ways_to_cultivate_gratitude_at_work
- Benefits Of A Year – Round Attitude Of Gratitude In The Workplace: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nazbeheshti/2018/11/20/benefits-of-a-year-round-attitude-of-gratitude-in-the-workplace/>
- Gratitude graffiti project. <https://thegratitudegraffitiproject.com/>
- Gratitude at Work: <https://gbr.pepperdine.edu/2010/08/gratitude-at-work/>
- Mayo Clinic Proc. Executive Leadership and Physician Well-being. [https://www.mayoclinicproceedings.org/article/S0025-6196\(16\)30625-5/fulltext](https://www.mayoclinicproceedings.org/article/S0025-6196(16)30625-5/fulltext)

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3. De Fabio, et al. (2017) Gratitude in Organizations: A Contribution for Healthy Organizational Contexts. *Front Psychol*.
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6. Emmons, R. A., & Shelton, C. M. (2002). Gratitude and the science of positive psychology. *Handbook of positive psychology*, 18, 459-471.
7. Allen (2018) The Science of Gratitude. https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC-JTF_White_Paper-Gratitude-FINAL.pdf
8. Kent State Gratitude Graffiti Project: <https://www.kent.edu/hr/faculty-staff-news/news/gratitude-graffiti-project-returns-kent-state-april-1>

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