



Gratitude: The Key to Personal and Professional Well-Being

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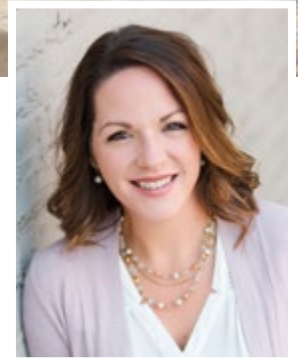
Practicing gratitude, the quality of being grateful or showing appreciation, is not just an act of politeness. Gratitude can foster a positive outlook and goodwill, which have been increasingly in short supply and difficult to maintain in the past year or so. Of the many things the pandemic has taught us, we've learned that our bodies and minds can only be tasked with so much before we start to bend and break. We take on more than we can handle out of the goodness of our heart or, in some cases, because we're required to. When balance is hard to come by and burnout among health care teams is at an all-time high, it is important for us to take a step back and focus on gratitude. Gratitude can be accomplished by implementing specific practices that can re-energize an exhausted imaging department. Now more than ever, it is imperative that we focus on healthy ways to cope, teach, and inspire others. Many of us have heard of gratitude practices but are unaware of the true impact of establishing these habits in our daily lives.

Embracing a Gratitude Practice

We are constantly hearing about the warning signs of burnout as health care professionals. Practicing gratitude is one of the most effective and easiest ways to decrease burnout in the health care profession. Gratitude is linked to well-being and resilience.¹ The health benefits are undeniable: lower stress, increased cardiovascular health and emotional wellness, and a boosted immune system.² Starting a daily gratitude practice can be challenging because of our busy schedules. However, 1 simple practice may be all you need: take the time to focus on something you're thankful for, even if for just 1 minute. This act can be all that's needed to feel less overwhelmed and more disconnected from stressors. The impact of this practice can be monumental, helping health care professionals work at their highest level and improving patients' perception of the quality of care they are receiving.

There are many easy and efficient methods of adopting a gratitude practice. The most effective is to build these methods into your normal routine³:

- Journal or meditate as you are enjoying your first cup of coffee or tea in the morning.
- Reflect on 1 person you're grateful for before turning on your computer and checking your email.
- Before you walk in to work, think of 3 people that need you to be the best version of yourself that day.



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- Set a calendar reminder on your phone or office computer that goes off at the same time each day to remind you of 3 affirmations that bring you gratitude.
- Focus on genuinely thanking 1 of your colleagues each day for a specific task, rather than just verbalizing the word "thanks" as you're going about your day.
- Before you leave your parking spot and start your drive home, reflect upon 3 things that brought you joy during your day.

Leaders must lead by example, so don't be afraid to share your routine and ideas with others. If you haven't established a routine, start small and create habits that you can stick to. Gratitude is contagious and should be encouraged. Enlist the help of your technologists, leadership team, and anyone willing to participate in creating a gratitude program/practice at your institution.

Expressing and Accepting Gratitude

Practicing gratitude is a method of demonstrating your core values to others at work while fostering a safe, supportive, and inclusive work environment. Instead of focusing on things outside of our control such as late patients, add-on examinations, equipment malfunctions, and unexpected staffing changes, we need to focus on the things we can control, such as how we treat others and how we respond to stressful situations. Our colleagues learn by our example. Make an effort to carry out activities that demonstrate kindness and gratitude:

- Purchase extra coffee or tea for colleagues. While you're there, pick up doughnuts for the entire team!
- Recognize the good work of others; write thank-you notes.
- Food works wonders: purchase lunch for your team.
- Smile at a stranger in the hallway every chance you get. Yes, masks make it difficult, but you can see their eyes smiling.
- Greet employees and patients when you walk through the front door of your facility.
- Check in with your colleagues by having genuine conversations. Ask "What can I do to help?" or "What can I do for you?"

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