



This month's highlights include **Being Thankful and Helping Others in Need.**

Being Thankful beyond Thanksgiving – The Benefits of Practicing Gratitude and Thankfulness

Feelings of gratitude are for more than celebrating at Thanksgiving dinner — gratitude and thankfulness have profound impacts on your mental health and overall wellbeing. Whether you're writing a thank-you note or practicing gratitude meditation, acknowledging what you're thankful for can help you feel lighter and more appreciative for the people and blessings in your life.

While it's not always easy to see your glass as half-full, there's some science that supports focusing on thankfulness. From feeling less stressed to making deeper connections and relationships, there are many benefits in expressing gratitude.

- **Gratitude Helps Release Negative Emotions**

Negative emotions tend to stick with us, and they can be harmful to our mental health if we don't release them in a healthy way, instead of choosing to bottle them up. They can even start to affect our physical wellbeing. Think about a time you felt physically ill from treating someone badly or because of the way a situation turned out. Addressing these emotions through gratitude helps us process and release them.

- **The Benefits of Gratitude Build on Each Other**

Being thankful and expressing gratitude have an immediate effect on your mood, and the mood-boosting benefits often snowball. At first, you might feel happy you told someone your feelings. You two could then strike up a longer conversation, and you'll start to feel a deeper connection. This could lead to fewer feelings of loneliness, deeper feelings of love and more.

- **Gratitude Has Lasting, Positive Effects on Your Brain**

Keeping feelings of gratitude to yourself can impact your ability to feel empathy or deal with stress. Getting these feelings out into the open may physically show a difference in your brain activity, according to a University of Southern California study. Researchers found that these changes in your brain then affect other decisions you make. Participants felt more likely to give to charity, for example, or help others in need after acknowledging their gratitude.

- **Thankfulness Improves Your Relationships**

One of the biggest benefits of regularly showing gratitude is the effect it has on your relationships. Daily or weekly expressions of gratitude cause you to think about the people and relationships in your life. The positive emotions and feelings that come from expressing your gratitude can subsequently strengthen those relationships.

Kindness Matters – Helping Others in Need

We're all familiar with the saying “it's better to give than receive”. What might surprise you is that this is actually supported by research.

Those of us who are kind and compassionate experience clear benefits to our well-being and happiness - we may even live longer. Kindness also helps reduce stress and improve our emotional well-being. We all have so much taking place in our lives - competing strains and stresses – not to mention the recent coronavirus pandemic and lockdowns. This has sometimes pushed kindness to one side, in favor of what is urgent now.

By taking the time to be kind to others, we can benefit from emotional upsides. It really does make a difference, especially for people who are vulnerable or struggling.

With everything that's going on in the world, now is the time to help make a kinder society that improves our mental health.

Take a few minutes and think about doing something kind for a friend or a stranger today.

Here are some ideas about getting involved

- ✓ Volunteer for a local community organization
- ✓ Offer your expertise and support as a mentor for those who are struggling
- ✓ Check-in safely with a neighbor
- ✓ See if there's anything you can do to support your children's school or nursery – offer to read stories for example
- ✓ Involve your friends and neighbors in community projects
- ✓ Offer to skill-share with a friend - you could teach guitar, dance or a new recipe
- ✓ Call a friend that you haven't spoken to for a while
- ✓ Tell a family member how much you love and appreciate them
- ✓ Offer a listening ear to someone who simply wants to talk

*“Show a little kindness every single day
Always give help to others who seem to have lost their way
Just a little show of kindness may be enough to get them through
For that person that is lost, one day might be you”*

By John F Connor



Sharecare Featured Challenge

December Kindness Challenge:

Being kind does not just benefit others, it could also help you live a longer, healthier life! Join the 21 Days of Kindness Challenge this December. Track for 21 days that you strived to do at least one act of kindness. Join the challenge by clicking **Achieve → Challenges → 21 Days of Kindness Challenge beginning on 11/25.**

Plan Ahead: Join us again in **2023** starting with **January's** health topic:

Preventive Care 101: Back to Basics