Giving *Thanks*

A life event, a song, a photo or movie may spark you to think of people, places or things of which you are grateful. What would happen if we became grateful on a more regular basis—a permanent trait rather than something we dwell on just several times a year? Research tells us that grateful people take better care of themselves and have better health behaviors such as regular exercise and exams and a healthier diet. They sleep better, are less anxious and have a higher satisfaction with life. The good news is that gratitude can be learned and the time and energy are not too extensive. Here are some ways to develop your “gratitude gene.”

- Make a gratitude journal.
  - One way to journal is to write down one sentence about 5 things on a weekly basis.
  - Another way is to write down 3 things for which you are grateful every day.
  - Adversity can promote gratitude. Finding the good in difficult situations elevates your perspective of yourself and the world. Writing about these situations, reflecting on what you have learned and putting it in the perspective of others will improve your outlook.

Gratitude journals should be done consistently for several months (or become a ritual in your life). There are several gratitude Apps that can make this easy. Check out this google search on gratitude Apps https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&rlz=1C1KAFB_enUS540US540&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8&q=gratitude%20apps

- Write a letter to a friend or colleague who has changed your life for the better. Deliver it and read it out loud to that person.
- Do you wake up worrying about the day ahead? Take 5 minutes before you get out of bed to be grateful and view the challenges in the positive.
- Humor can help with gratefulness. Instead of complaining that the turkey is overdone, be grateful to know that all the bacteria is dead. Have to listen to Aunt Martha’s political tirade? Give thanks that she is not an elected official.
- Reframe a situation by looking at it in a more positive way. Rather than battling with a tired child, acknowledge the tiredness (to yourself) and suggest a resting time.

Exercise can be another place where thoughts of gratitude may happen (well, please—not when you are riding a bike on a busy road . . .). Before you plug in the headphones, take the first few minutes to be thankful for the body that can move as well as other people or circumstances. Or combine your cool down stretches with some grateful thoughts.

Do you have a gratitude practice or has this reading invited you to start one? Send me an email (Betty.Blanton@ttu.edu) explaining how you are purposefully grateful (there may be a prize and no, I won’t reveal your name).