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Cultivating a Practice of Gratitude and Appreciation in Your School Community  
Guided Notes Created by Renée K. Van Norman, PhD

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**Guided Notes** are designed for you to follow along and actively participate with the PowerPoint slides and webinar. You can make notes, write questions, expand your thinking on a topic, or doodle. These notes correspond directly to the content presented in the PowerPoint Slides.

### Today's objectives

- ❖ Learn strategies to **create a practice of gratitude and appreciation** in your daily routine within your school community.
- ❖ Learn how to **receive and apply appreciation to boost resiliency** especially at the end of the school year.
- ❖ Identify several **benefits to a practice of gratitude and appreciation** to both self and within a school community.

### Agenda

Importance of Gratitude & Appreciation

Cultivating Gratitude & Appreciation

Appreciating Others in a School Community

Importance of Celebrations

Celebration Ideas for 2020

### Intention Setting

Right now, I will put aside my thoughts of...

By...

So, that I can...



Present

## Gratitude Meditation

<https://youtu.be/ZXRMZV0qNo> (Happier TV)

### Two Components of Gratitude <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/gratitude/definition>

- ❖ “It’s an **affirmation of goodness**. We affirm that there are good things in the world, gifts and benefits we’ve received.” Robert Emmons, leading scientific expert on gratitude
- ❖ “We recognize that the **sources of this goodness are outside of ourselves**.” Emmons
  - Acknowledge that others gave us many gifts to help us achieve the goodness in our lives.

### Why Cultivate a Community of Appreciation & Gratitude?

64% of people who quit their jobs say they do so because they do not feel appreciated or valued (US Department of Labor, Robbins, 2017)

New educators need their successes and contributions to be acknowledged to build resilience (Sumsion, 2004)

Pursue our goals, become more socially engaged, improve ourselves and our community (Layous et al., 2017)

Social bonds strengthen, feel more supported, fueling confidence to take on big challenges (Layous et al., 2017)

More motivated to help those who have helped them including total strangers (Bartlett and Desteno, 2006)

Strengthened immune systems, improved sleep, feeling more optimistic, mitigate depression (Domet, 2018)

### Because it feels good!

- ❖ “Feelings of gratitude activate the **limbic system**, a powerful set of **brain structures** that includes the hypothalamus and **amygdala**, both which play a large role in regulating our emotions, memory, and endocrine function (hormones).
- ❖ It is here where **brain chemicals** associated with **positivity**, including **oxytocin** (the love hormone,) **serotonin**, **norepinephrine**, and **dopamine** are generated in an endogenous, uplifting molecular boost that helps us transition into a healthier and more adaptive head space.” <https://www.turnaroundusa.org/back-to-basics-gratitude/>

How does a little gratitude make you feel?

Jon Lee’s Gratitude Guided Meditation from the Insight Timer App <https://insighttimer.com/jklee>

## Teacher Appreciation More than Just Once Per Year!

 **shonda rhimes** ✓  
@shondarhimes

Been homeschooling a 6-year old and 8-year old for one hour and 11 minutes. Teachers deserve to make a billion dollars a year. Or a week.

♡ 420K 5:12 PM - Mar 16, 2020

71.3K people are talking about this

 **Nicholas Ferroni** ✓  
@NicholasFerroni

This pandemic has already revealed that:

- schools are so much more than just schools.
- many people now realize how tough it is to be a teacher and that teachers are grossly underpaid.
- teachers are irreplaceable and essential to learning and education. #homeschooling

♡ 141K 4:26 PM - Mar 17, 2020

31.9K people are talking about this boredpanda.com

 **Amy McGrath** ✓  
@AmyMcGrathKY

At the end of the first day of my kids being out of school after our attempts at "homeschooling"... my conclusion... teachers are superheroes. The end.

♡ 95.2K 1:57 AM - Mar 17, 2020

15.5K people are talking about this boredpanda.com

### The Importance of Self-Appreciation: A How To (Aguilar, 2018)

- ❖ Think of 3 things that went well and your role in their success
- ❖ Set an alarm, pause, and appreciate yourself in the moment
- ❖ Write yourself a letter or thank you note at the end of the week or on a particularly rough day
- ❖ Send a text message or quick email of appreciation

**It starts with you! Same good feelings!**

**Feeling Successful Meditation** (Adaptation from Hanson, R. (2018) Citation in Resources Section)



Video Reflection:

Video Robert Emmons Cultivating Gratitude Greater Good Science Center

<https://youtu.be/8964envYh58>

## Cultivating Gratitude



### Keep a daily gratitude journal

- ❖ Start by breathing into a soft space in your mind, envisioning warmth
- ❖ Write down 3-5 things you're grateful for:  
"I am grateful..." *Breathe in and feel* these gifts as you write...
- ❖ Share your gratitude



### Write a letter of gratitude every week; include your students and colleagues!

- ❖ Research demonstrates the powerfully positive effects for the writer *and* the receiver.

<https://www.turnaroundusa.org/back-to-basics-gratitude/>



### Writing a Gratitude Letter



#### Step 1: **Choose your recipient.**

- ❖ Think of people who have changed your life for the better.
- ❖ Write down all those names that pop up.

#### Step 2: **Brainstorm specifics.**

- ❖ How exactly has the path of your life changed for the better because it happened to cross theirs?
- ❖ What important lessons have they taught you?
  - Revisiting your positive memories and stories is rewiring your brain to more easily seek positive perceptions of the people around you, even before you put pen to paper.

#### Step 3: **Start writing.**

- ❖ Why you're writing this letter; How you met. The specifics of how your recipient helped, shaped or inspired you.
  - "I remember once you did ... and here's why that was so meaningful to me," or "You helped me when you ..." or "You may not realize it, but you inspire me by ..."

#### Step 4: **Keep a copy.**

- ❖ On days you feel low, your gratitude letters can be a powerful reminder that others have helped you overcome dark days in the past.

From Nancy Davis Kho is an Oakland freelance writer and author of *"The Thank-You Project: Cultivating Happiness One Letter of Gratitude at a Time"* (Running Press Adult; 2019)  
Email [culture@sfchronicle.com](mailto:culture@sfchronicle.com)

## Cultivating Gratitude (Continued)

- ❖ Find a “gratitude buddy.”
  - Spend 2-5 minute a day *sharing and feeling* the things you are grateful for, *together!*
- ❖ Take a walk outside under the big blue sky.
  - Notice the trees, the grass, the flowers and the birds singing. Breathe deeply, in and out, and notice how it feels...
- ❖ Act with intention.
  - “Act as if”

<https://www.turnaroundusa.org/back-to-basics-gratitude/>

- ❖ Remember the difficult times
- ❖ Ask yourself 3 questions
  - Meditation technique - Naikan
    - “What have I received from-----”, What have I given to -----?, and “What troubles and difficulty have I caused?”
- ❖ Come to your senses
- ❖ Use visual reminders

Robert Emmons [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/ten\\_ways\\_to\\_become\\_more\\_grateful1/](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/ten_ways_to_become_more_grateful1/)

## Gratitude and Technology

<https://www.happierhuman.com/gratitude-app/>



# Gratitude

Simple Private Colorful Journal App



# DAY ONE

Your Journal for Life.

## 365 Gratitude



Daily Prompts

Games

Gratitude Jar

reflectly

## The World's First Intelligent Journal

Reflectly is a journal utilizing artificial intelligence to help you structure and reflect upon your daily thoughts and problems.

Your personal mental health companion.

Download on the  **App Store**

GET IT ON  **Google Play**




Video Reflection:

Science of Gratitude Video <https://youtu.be/JMd1CcGZYwU>



### Cultivating Gratitude & Appreciation in a School Community - Classroom

- ❖ Morning Meeting
- ❖ Before Lunch/After Lunch Check-In/Out
- ❖ Friday Thank You Notes
- ❖ Field Trip Thank You Notes
- ❖ What might that character be grateful for?
- ❖ End of the day check out

## Cultivating Gratitude & Appreciation in a School Community - Faculty

- ❖ Start & End Faculty Meetings
- ❖ Appreciation Vine
- ❖ Bulletin Board
- ❖ Appreciation Jar
- ❖ Monthly “Appreciators”
- ❖ These are a few of my favorite things...



List other ways you will cultivate a practice of gratitude and appreciation in your school community.



# HOW TO BUILD TEACHER WELLBEING

Wellbeing is "a state in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community" (WHO, 2004).



Professor Martin Seligman, the father of Positive Psychology, explained a holistic Wellbeing Theory called PERMA that was published in his book "Flourish" (2011).



School communities can use PERMA to build teacher wellbeing as a way to support schools to flourish

WHAT	PILLAR OF WELLBEING	HOW
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Track the good stuff	 Positive Emotions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Establish a "What Went Well" board in the staffroom <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Keep a gratitude diary, app or jar nearby. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Encourage savouring of positive events
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Identify character strengths	 Engagement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take the VIA Survey to identify strengths <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Create a strengths tree in the staffroom <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Encourage goal setting that relates to passion, values & interests
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Share, collaborate, support	 Relationships	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Encourage random acts of kindness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Incorporate thank you cards into staff meetings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Establish mentoring or coaching programs <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunities for positive feedback
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reflect on meaning and purpose	 Meaning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Redefine your job description what is your real role? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Put some pictures on your desk of what is important to you <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Practice moments of mindfulness to be present, without judgement
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Set authentic goals	 Accomplishment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Encourage SMART goal setting (specific, measurable, authentic, relevant, set a time) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Give opportunities to celebrate achievements



## Know Your Audience!

### Public appreciation

- Whole group, in front of everyone, people invited to offer an appreciation to anyone they want

### Pulling a name

- Pull one community members name, then invite people to share an appreciation about that person. Each time you meet pull a new name

### Written appreciations

- Jot down appreciations on sticky notes and hand them to the person

### Silent appreciations

- Meditative appreciation, who do you appreciate and why do you appreciate that person

Aguilar, 2018

## Celebrations & Resilience

“Endings are logical opportunities for celebrations; they are critical junctures for rituals that mark transitions and accomplishments”

“Our **social and emotional selves** need opportunities to acknowledge what we’ve done and to **honor the relationships** we’ve built with others.”

“Celebrations **boosts our resilience**, because, in looking back we select the strands of story that we weave into our narrative of our strength.

We edit our memories, selecting those that **align with our core values** and reflect who we want to be in the world.

And in creating the narrative of who we are, we become **more resilient.**”

Elena Aguilar [Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators](#), p. 290

## CELEBRATIONS!

### Activities & Celebrations – Lower Grades

- ❖ Host a scavenger hunt
- ❖ Minute to win it games
- ❖ Show and share
- ❖ Send a letter to the next grade teacher
- ❖ Balloon Pop Countdown
- ❖ End of the Year Virtual Read Alouds

## **Activities & Celebrations – Upper Grades**

- ❖ Oscars event
  - Most epic moments from the school year
- ❖ Digital Yearbook Signing
- ❖ Senior Banquet and Netflix Night
- ❖ Decorating Front Doors
- ❖ Create a farewell address
- ❖ Virtual Concerts
- ❖ Senior Sports Spotlights/Highlights
- ❖ Adopt a Senior
- ❖ Virtual Prom

## **Activities & Celebrations – All Grades**

- ❖ Top 10 List
- ❖ End of School Year Reflections
- ❖ Create an End of School Year Rap
- ❖ Internet Game day
- ❖ Spirit Week

*Make a plan! What ways will you celebrate the end of this school year?*

## Resources

- Aguiar, E. (2018). *Onward: Cultivating emotional resilience in educators*. Jossey-Bass.
- Bartlett, M. Y., & DeStano, D. (2006) "Gratitude and Prosocial Behavior: Helping when it costs you." *Psychological Science*, 17(4), 319-325.
- Domet (2018) <https://www.mindful.org/a-simple-mindful-gratitude-exercise/>
- Emmons, R. Video Robert Emmons Cultivating Gratitude Greater Good Science Center <https://youtu.be/8964envYh58>
- Emmons, R. [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/ten\\_ways\\_to\\_become\\_more\\_grateful1/](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/ten_ways_to_become_more_grateful1/)
- Falecki, D. <https://www.teacher-wellbeing.com.au/>
- Hanson, R. (2018). *Resilient: How to grow and unshakable core of calm, strength, and happiness*. Harmony Books.
- Layous, K., Sweeny, K., Armenta, S., Na., S., Choi, I., Lyubomirsky, S. (2017) "The Proximal Experience of Gratitude." *PLOS ONE*, 12(7) e0179123.
- Lee, Jon. Insight Timer <https://insighttimer.com/jklee>
- Robbins, M. *Focus on the Good Stuff: The Power of Appreciation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007.
- Sumsion, J. (2004) Early Childhood Teachers' Construction of their Resilience and Thriving: A Continuing Investigation." *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 12(3), 275-290.
- <https://www.turnaroundusa.org/back-to-basics-gratitude/>
- 5 Minute Gratitude Meditation Happier TV <https://youtu.be/ZXRMZyV0qNo>
- <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/gratitude/definition>
- Celebration Video <https://youtu.be/UWLIqjB9gGw>
- Science of Gratitude Video <https://youtu.be/JMd1CcGZYwU>
- Nancy Davis Kho is an Oakland freelance writer and author of "The Thank-You Project: Cultivating Happiness One Letter of Gratitude at a Time" (Running Press Adult; 2019)  
Email [culture@sfchronicle.com](mailto:culture@sfchronicle.com)

## Other Resources

- Greater Good Science Center White Paper on Gratitude  
[https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC-JTF\\_White\\_Paper-Gratitude-FINAL.pdf](https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC-JTF_White_Paper-Gratitude-FINAL.pdf)
- Getting Started on a Gratitude Journal  
[https://www.moms.com/gratitude-journal-tips-to-get-started/?fbclid=IwAR0i\\_Nxj5RvKtzlZd1fQvAsrKjezrp1W8bL7\\_hZ6DAYsR2g2-gsH5dNxCMw](https://www.moms.com/gratitude-journal-tips-to-get-started/?fbclid=IwAR0i_Nxj5RvKtzlZd1fQvAsrKjezrp1W8bL7_hZ6DAYsR2g2-gsH5dNxCMw)
- Why Gratitude is Good – Robert Emmons  
[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why\\_gratitude\\_is\\_good](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_gratitude_is_good)

## End-of-the-School-Year 2020 Celebration Resources

### Free Remote Wellbeing Resources

<https://teachpeec.com/curriculum/primary/remote-learning-resources/1-9-week-8/>

### 4 Ways to Celebrate the End of the School Year on Zoom

<https://www.mrsrichardsonsclass.com/4-ways-to-celebrate-the-end-of-the-year-on-zoom/>

### Party Time in the Zoom Room

<https://mydayinkinder.com/party-time-in-the-zoom-room/>

### Celebrating the Class of 2020

<https://www.weareteachers.com/celebrate-high-school-seniors/>

<https://cyberbullying.org/eight-fun-student-engagement-ideas-during-covid-19-beyond>

### Virtual End-Of-The-Year Activities

<https://www.teachbetweenthelines.org/read-from-the-blog-1/2020/4/7/virtual-end-of-year-activities-and-ideas>

<https://elementarynest.com/virtual-end-of-the-year-ideas-for-teachers/?fbclid=IwAR2TGToltRwNFGGaUctxNJiDkLJR59iXsjjQKJCHx4e5fLRUyv00pLUnTDg>

<https://www.thebutterflyteacher.com/end-of-the-year-distance-learning-idea/>