



# Harbor Symmetry Wellness

## Balancing Productivity & Life's Challenges

### Life, Gratitude, and the New Year

It is our human nature to dwell on the negative. This tendency is called the "negativity bias," or the propensity to focus on problems, annoyances, and injustices in our lives rather than focusing on being grateful for the events or people in our lives that are working and we feel good about.

Research by Jeffrey J. Froh, an assistant professor of psychology at Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y., has found that adults who feel grateful are more optimistic, report more social satisfaction, experience less envy, less depression and fewer physical complaints. They also sleep better and get more exercise. Kids who experience more gratitude do better in school, set higher goals for themselves, derive more satisfaction from life, friends, family, and school and are generally less materialistic and have more desire to give back.

So, how do we change from our negative habits to that of feeling more regular gratitude?

*Happy 2014! At Harbor Symmetry Wellness we hope it is a healthy and prosperous new year for you and your organization. Please keep us in mind if we can be of assistance to you in meeting your organizational goals for the year ahead. We want you to see us as a partner, who can help you in dealing not only with difficult employee matters, but also in helping your employees excel, meet personal and professional goals, and be well.*



Sincerely,  
Marsha Drees  
Director, Harbor Symmetry Wellness & Private Insurance Services  
MSSA, LISW-S, LICDC, CEAP

### Here is a starter list from Dr. Froh:

- » Get a gratitude buddy and talk about what you are grateful for with your buddy. Your buddy can help you make sure you acknowledge where your joy comes from (the difference between bragging and feeling grateful).
- » Keep a gratitude journal - document daily what you feel grateful about.
- » Pay a gratitude visit to someone who has helped you in the past or write them a letter.
- » Pause mindfully during the day when something happens that you feel grateful about; make a mental note.
- » Watch your language even when talking to yourself - be mindful of when you are focusing on the negative.
- » Savor the good times with your family and friends. Verbally acknowledge and appreciate the people and events that you feel grateful for.

*Excerpt from: Psychology Today; by Samantha Smithstein, Psy.D.*

### Stress Tip

Just breathe. When things get stressful or you're feeling overwhelmed... just take a deep breath and breathe into the areas of your body that feel stressed.

Imagine that you're breathing light and love into that space, and clearing out the negative energy on the exhale. Breathe, love and release. Repeat as often as needed.

*Be the Best, Healthiest and Happiest You™ Copyright © 2014 Stephenie Zamora*

### TEACHING KIDS THE IMPORTANCE OF GRATITUDE

The best way parents can raise grateful kids is by modeling the behavior themselves.

Most parents have taught their kids the importance of saying thank you by grade school, if not sooner. But how many have truly instructed them in the art of being grateful? Just as you teach your kids to read and write, you can also educate them in

gratitude. And, it's never too early to start!

#### The Importance of Gratitude

Both expressing — and feeling — gratitude are important parts of life. "Gratitude in the most basic terms is being thankful and appreciative of the good things you have," says Sheela Raja, PhD, an assistant professor

and clinical psychologist in the Colleges of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Illinois at Chicago. You can be grateful for a wide range of "gifts," everything from nature and good food to good luck or a wonderful opportunity for the people in your life, according to Raja.

**(continued on next page...)**

**We all have challenges. Sometimes they may be overwhelming and start to affect other areas of your life. Before that happens, take advantage of the professional counseling, coaching and referral services offered by Symmetry Wellness, your organization's participant assistance program (PAP) provider. We can help.**

**1.800.422.5338 or 419.475.5338. It's free and confidential.**

## TEACHING KIDS THE IMPORTANCE OF GRATITUDE (continued)

A sense of gratitude can benefit children (and adults) in a variety of ways. It can decrease stress and has other important emotional health benefits. A person who is grateful tends to spend less time comparing him or herself with others and feeling envious. It also helps people, especially children, step into someone else's shoes and realize that another person did something nice for them even though he or she didn't have to.

### Ways to Teach Gratitude

Toddlers and preschoolers should be taught to say thank you when they receive a gift or a kindness from another person. Modeling is also critical for kids this age. "Kids pick up on what parents do and

say," says Raja. "If you feel grateful about something that happened to you, share it with them." Show gratitude for something small, such as a sunny day or a cup of fresh coffee.

By grade school, children can think a little more in depth and should be encouraged to reflect on their day. Parents should ask what they liked and what they feel grateful for. Raja encourages her family to say what they are grateful for before dinner each night while Paula Langguth Ryan of Boulder, Colo., and author of *Giving Thanks, The Art of Tithing*, recommends a gratitude list. The gratitude list can be good things that happened, but can and should also include possible

good things that can come out of something bad that occurred.

Ultimately gratitude can help adults and children alike, and the best thing parents can do is be a good role model for their children. So the next time something good — or even not so good — happens, express your appreciation out loud. Everyone will benefit from it!

Source: <http://www.everydayhealth.com/saying-thanks/teaching-kids-the-importance-of-gratitude.aspx>

## It's easy to make a goal or resolution, but the hard part is keeping that motivation and forming new habits. Below is an overlooked strategy to help you stay motivated.

Do you have an important goal that you just keep losing sight of? Or are you trying to make difficult changes for the new year that will ultimately lead to a healthier and happier life, but are worried you won't stay on track?

When we want to do something differently, say to save money, stand up for ourselves or exercise more frequently, we often start with enthusiasm. But habits are hard to change. After an initial burst of energy, it's easy to fall back into old patterns of behavior.

What we too frequently overlook when we try to make changes, is what is happening around us that either boosts motivation or contributes to slipping back into the status quo.

### To stay motivated, it's essential to...

**Pay attention to those things that happen at the same time you are trying to make changes.** If exercising more often is paired in your mind with missing relaxing time in front of the TV, you'll likely lose your enthusiasm for exercising. On the other hand, if exercising means you get a much-needed break and some time with a friend, you're much more likely to stick with it.

**Actively seek out ways to pair positives with steps toward your goal.** You're more likely to repeat an action when something positive occurs with it.

**Have a positive support system.** People have a tremendous effect on whether we stay motivated. A smile, "good job" or validation of your efforts will go a long way toward keeping you going when your spirits are lagging.

**Try this...** If you've got a specific goal you're trying to achieve or a change you're trying to make, consider making a list of positives that you could pair with actions toward your goal. Can you call a supportive friend when you resist the urge to buy a new pair of shoes, or can you focus in on the feelings of pride and accomplishment when you stand up for yourself instead of putting your needs last?

Ask yourself how you can make a conscious effort to arrange for positives to support the changes you want to make. Too often we leave our motivation to chance or become self-critical and resigned to staying the same.

**Symmetry Wellness professionals are available to assist you through personal coaching, to help you achieve the goals you have set.**

## 10 Ways to Stay Motivated Daily

1. Have a vision for yourself
2. Follow your passion
3. Track results
4. Read and listen to inspiring stories
5. Ride the wave when it comes
6. Pamper yourself
7. Experiment with something new
8. Find a workout partner
9. Don't be too hard on yourself if you miss one workout.
10. Reward yourself to a fitness gadget or accessory!

Source: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/christy-matta-ma/motivation-tips\\_b\\_1471075.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/christy-matta-ma/motivation-tips_b_1471075.html)