

WELLNESS MINUTE

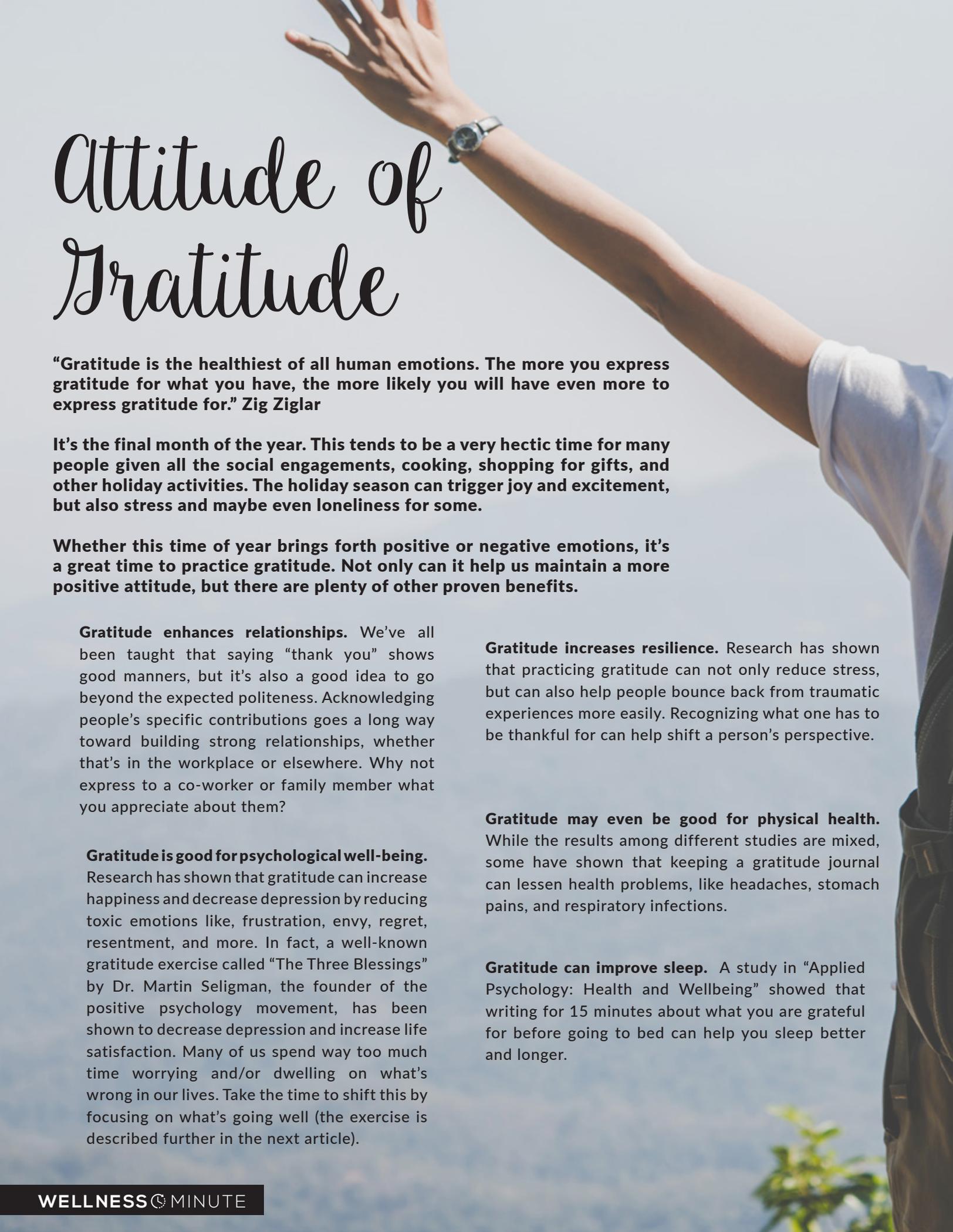
DECEMBER 2018



*Attitude of
Gratitude*

**DECEMBER
EXERCISE:
RESISTANCE
BANDS**

**CHOCOLATE
CHIA PUDDING**

A person's arm is extended upwards, reaching towards the top of the frame. The hand is open, with fingers slightly spread. The person is wearing a silver watch on their left wrist. The background is a clear, bright blue sky with some faint clouds. The overall mood is positive and aspirational.

Attitude of Gratitude

“Gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions. The more you express gratitude for what you have, the more likely you will have even more to express gratitude for.” Zig Ziglar

It’s the final month of the year. This tends to be a very hectic time for many people given all the social engagements, cooking, shopping for gifts, and other holiday activities. The holiday season can trigger joy and excitement, but also stress and maybe even loneliness for some.

Whether this time of year brings forth positive or negative emotions, it’s a great time to practice gratitude. Not only can it help us maintain a more positive attitude, but there are plenty of other proven benefits.

Gratitude enhances relationships. We’ve all been taught that saying “thank you” shows good manners, but it’s also a good idea to go beyond the expected politeness. Acknowledging people’s specific contributions goes a long way toward building strong relationships, whether that’s in the workplace or elsewhere. Why not express to a co-worker or family member what you appreciate about them?

Gratitude is good for psychological well-being. Research has shown that gratitude can increase happiness and decrease depression by reducing toxic emotions like, frustration, envy, regret, resentment, and more. In fact, a well-known gratitude exercise called “The Three Blessings” by Dr. Martin Seligman, the founder of the positive psychology movement, has been shown to decrease depression and increase life satisfaction. Many of us spend way too much time worrying and/or dwelling on what’s wrong in our lives. Take the time to shift this by focusing on what’s going well (the exercise is described further in the next article).

Gratitude increases resilience. Research has shown that practicing gratitude can not only reduce stress, but can also help people bounce back from traumatic experiences more easily. Recognizing what one has to be thankful for can help shift a person’s perspective.

Gratitude may even be good for physical health. While the results among different studies are mixed, some have shown that keeping a gratitude journal can lessen health problems, like headaches, stomach pains, and respiratory infections.

Gratitude can improve sleep. A study in “Applied Psychology: Health and Wellbeing” showed that writing for 15 minutes about what you are grateful for before going to bed can help you sleep better and longer.



Three ways to express more gratitude

As the previous article discusses, there are many benefits to feeling more grateful. The best way to reap these benefits is to implement a regular gratitude practice. Here are three simple ways to do this. Choose whichever one resonates most or do them all.

- Keep a gratitude journal and write three things you are grateful for each day. Doing this at night before going to bed can help make it a routine and improve sleep. For others, doing it first thing in the morning, can help get the day off to a positive start. The things you write can be small or big, like the way a person supported you at work, the sound of birds near your window, the delicious meal you enjoyed, etc. If daily seems like too much or it becomes too routine, then do it once a week to keep it fresh.
- Practice the “Three Blessings” exercise developed by Dr. Seligman mentioned above. Take about 10 minutes each night before bed to write down three things that went well that day and why they went well. This helps to decrease your focus on the negative aspects of your life and writing the reasons why the three things went well allows you to feel more in control of your circumstances.
- Write a gratitude letter. This can be a short note, an email, or even a card letting someone know how much they mean to you. Try to be concrete and specific about what you appreciate about them or the things they have done for you. The holiday season is a great time to show gratitude toward others, but this is a good practice to do on a regular basis, especially when someone has helped you in some way.

**We at Wellness-Connect are very grateful for you
and wish you a happy and healthy holiday season!**

DECEMBER EXERCISE RESISTANCE BANDS

In the November newsletter, we made some suggestions about staying active during the holidays. December can be even more hectic, which can make it tempting to allow your workout routine to go out the window. While extra commitments, less time, and possibly holiday travel, can get in the way, it's important to keep moving as much as possible. Physical activity can help reduce the stress that can increase with this season, not to mention it can help burn off some of those extra calories that most of us consume this time of year.

If you're short on time or are doing some traveling, resistance bands can make for a practical and effective workout. Here are 5 benefits to using them.

Affordable: They can be a relatively inexpensive addition to your home workout equipment. There are a variety of different types available, including pull up bands, loop bands, clip tube bands, door clip bands, and bungee style resistance bands. Sets can be purchased on Amazon.com for between \$7-35.00.

Easy to store: Unlike other equipment, they take up very little space and can easily be put away in a drawer or closet, or even hung on a hook.

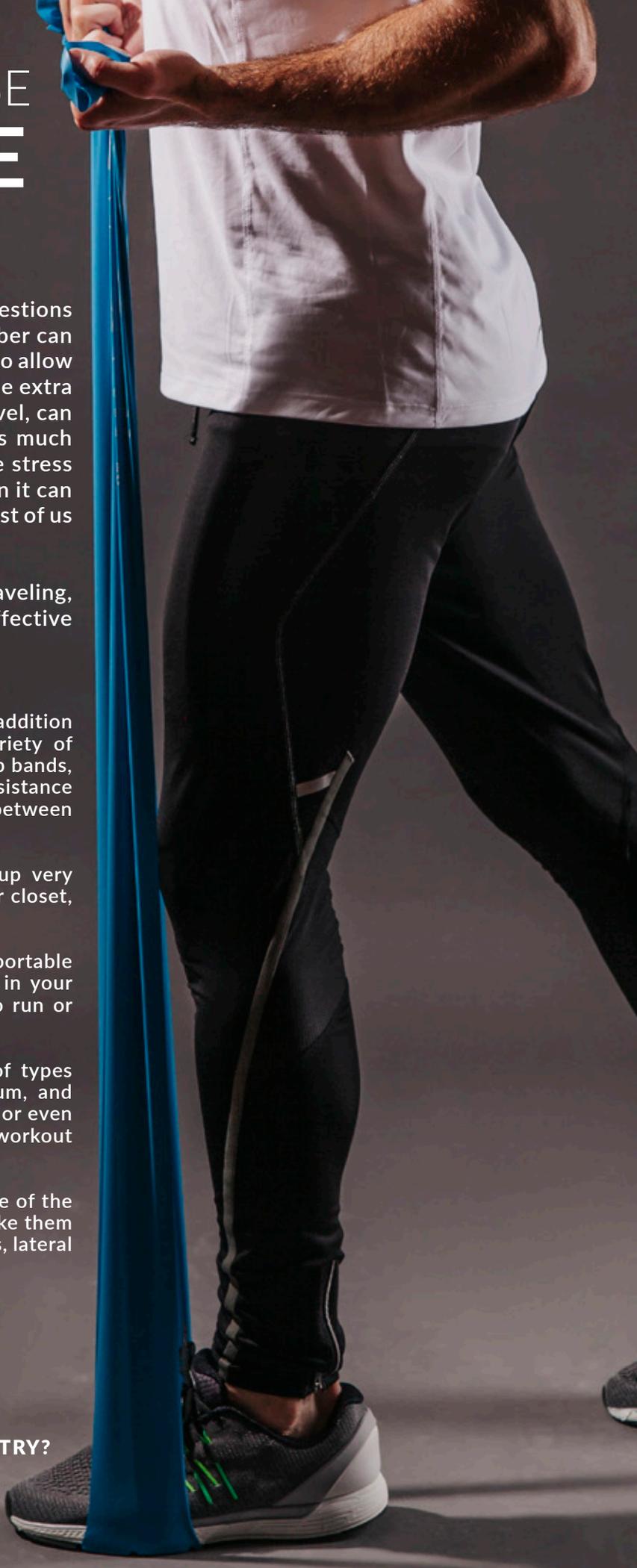
Ideal for travel: The fact that they are small and portable makes them practical for trips. If there isn't a gym in your hotel and the weather is too wet or cold for you to run or walk, you can still get a good workout.

Adaptable: As mentioned, they come in a variety of types to fit different fitness levels, including light, medium, and heavy resistance. Many come with instruction guides or even videos. You can also find great resistance band workout videos on youtube.com to help you mix it up.

Enhance strength training: You can add them to some of the strength-training exercises you may already do to make them more effective, for example, leg lifts, arm curls, squats, lateral lunges, side bends, and more.

RESISTANCE BANDS CAN EASILY
BE COMBINED WITH OTHER
WORKOUTS TO OFFER MORE VARIETY.

HAVE YOU USED THEM? ARE YOU READY TO TRY?



The holiday season brings lots of temptations to indulge in sweets and other not so healthy foods. If you're trying to stick to healthy eating, you don't necessarily have to deprive yourself of treats. Here's a delicious and healthy dessert recipe that can satisfy your sweet tooth without any added sugar or other unhealthy ingredients.

Chocolate Chia Pudding

(serves 4)

- 6 pitted Medjool dates
- 3 cups almond milk
- 4 tablespoons raw unsweetened cacao powder
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- 4 tablespoons chia seeds
- 1 cup of raspberries

Directions

Soak pitted dates in warm water for about 15 minutes to soften.

Once dates are soft, put them into a food processor or blender (without the water).

Add the milk to the food processor or blender and process or blend until smooth.

Mix the cacao, cinnamon, and vanilla in a large mixing bowl.

Stir in almond milk/date mixture into the bowl with the other ingredients and mix well.

Add chia seeds, mix thoroughly and refrigerate for about 4 hours to allow the chia seeds to absorb the liquid and thicken the pudding.

Serve into bowls and top with raspberries.

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HEAR from our MEMBERS

“The wellness program has helped me organize my plan for better health through lessons on exercise and nutrition as well as keeping me motivated to walk each day to reach 5k, 10k, and 15k. The coach also offered great advice. I like the rewards program offering token trade-ins to gift cards as well. Lastly, I attribute my weight loss and better sleep to the wellness program. Thanks!”

Sung L. | CARSON, CA

Allura Health
wishes you and
yours a healthy
holiday season!

Amazing
Success
Story

“I have had a great journey with the Wellness program! At first, I didn’t want to get roped into some “official” way of keeping track of the healthy things I was doing, but then people started telling me how great the program was and how easy it was to earn points. I’m not really much of a “joiner”, but I decided to give it a try.

I had been walking around my neighborhood fairly regularly, but decided to start getting REALLY serious when I could get points (and eventually money!) for the number of steps I walked. I did the Biometrics bloodwork and was prompted by some of the numbers to start going to the doctor, and when I saw my weight, I wanted to start reducing that number! My husband was told to lose some weight as well, and in keeping him company by eating what he ate, I starting losing some weight myself! I didn’t even realize it until I went back to the doctor and discovered that I was down several pounds!

This, of course, motivated me to continue to walk and watch my diet, and I lost a little more weight. I’m certainly not what one would call thin, but since I hit my all-time high, I have lost about 30 pounds and have managed to keep it off.

I feel better about myself, and I’ve begun encouraging co-workers to participate in more Wellness activities. In fact, I was just chosen to be the “Wellness Champion” representing my library on a committee made of members throughout our library system! Woo-hoo!”

Robin S. | CHOCTAW, OK