

Good morning and happy Monday team!

I hope you all had a great weekend. It is wild to think that this semester is moving so quickly. I have heard many of you practicing positive self-talk and gratitude. Y'all are awesome.

A few years ago, the magazine *Psychology Today* referenced a study from the National Institutes of Health that reported that subjects who showed more gratitude overall had higher levels of activity in the hypothalamus, which is the part of the brain that controls bodily functions.

Doing something as straightforward as saying "Thank you" is like a tune-up for your inner world.

Expressing gratitude caused participants to experience an increase in dopamine hits. **Once you start seeing things to be grateful for, your brain starts looking for more things to be grateful for.**

Research revealed seven key benefits to those who make gratitude a practice:

1. Gratitude opens the door to more relationships
2. Gratitude improves physical health.
3. Gratitude improves psychological health.
4. Gratitude enhances empathy and reduces aggression.
5. Grateful people sleep better.
6. Gratitude improves self-esteem.
7. Gratitude increases mental strength.

So... why is it so hard to be grateful when life isn't going the way we think it should?

We do not have to spin – because we know our happiness is anchored in something greater than life circumstances. **We are not slaves to our circumstances.**

Yes, it's tempting to find a home in our pain, to define ourselves by others wrongdoing is to render ourselves helpless and weak. To take back our power and control shows strength to only continue to bind us up.

What are you looking toward to make you happy? We don't have to like our circumstances, but we can **choose to look for the unexpected gifts they may bring.**

We can acknowledge our suffering without abandoning our joy. We don't have to find our identity in a cause.

To see good purposes, we must focus our gaze beyond our immediate situations. We all have purposes that include what we want to do and who we want to be.

Trauma and even difficult situations are like having a vase that has been shattered. There are many broken pieces on the floor waiting for you to put back together. The vase might not look the exact same. However, it can still be a vase. This vase can still hold water and be beautiful. We have the control to put it back together piece by piece. Trauma might be a part of the story, but it is not your story.

“It is only in our darkest hours that we may discover the true strength of the brilliant light within ourselves that can never, ever, be dimmed.”

- Doe Zantamata

Peace,
Maggie

Maggie Beshears, LPC
Director of Counseling at UACCB
Office Phone: 870-612-2035
Pronouns: she/her/hers
For an Emergency, Call 988 or the National Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

