Health and Well-Being

Thanksgiving highlights for us the theme of being thankful for the blessings in our lives. The ex-pression of gratitude is essential to human-kind's sustainability and survival. Gratitude's stabilizing and healing effects, which have been researched from multiple standpoints-cultural, psychological, physical, spiritual, even financial, have made it very clear the benefits of living a grateful life are irrefutable.

If gratitude is a state of being that is essential to a life well lived, then why, in modern times, do we not cultivate and express it on a daily basis? After all, giving thanks and expressing apprecia-tion for the blessings and gifts of life is a natural human response. Perhaps the reason we do not make gratitude a part of our daily lives is that our busy fast paced and multiple distractions of mod-ern life have made it all too easy to forget the importance of showing gratitude. Gratitude is a feeling that sponta-neously emerges from within. However, it is not simply an emotional response; it is also a choice we make. We can choose to be grateful, or we can choose to be ungrateful—to take our gifts and blessings for granted.

As writer Alexis de Tocqueville once described it, gratitude is "a habit of the heart." Brother David Steindl-Rast, a Benedictine monk, reminds us that "gratefulness is the inner gesture of giving meaning to our life by receiving life as gift." M. J. Ryan's classic book, Attitudes of Gratitude, supports the idea that gratitude is a stance we voluntarily take, and one we can adopt through the difficult seasons of life as well as the good ones. The daily practice of gratitude keeps the heart open regardless of what comes our way.

This season, and every season of life, take the moments to show gratitude to everyone in your life!

Book recommendation: Attitudes of Gratitude: How to Give and Receive Joy Every Day of Your Life by M.J. Ryan

Happy Thanksgiving from the Health and Well-Being Committee!

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