Filling Up Your Cup
"An Attitude of Gratitude "
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In a world where we are confronted by long work days, clinic notes, inbox messages following us, and never-ending family obligations, it may be difficult to see a glimmer of light at the end of a long, dark tunnel. Like every aspect of mindfulness, having a practice of gratitude is essential. Gratitude is essentially a practice of finding the positive aspects of our lives. Even at the most painful parts of our journeys, we have at least one thing for which we can be grateful. When we are going through a difficult time, it may be difficult to find that one thing.

I personally like to write in a daily gratitude journal. One of my friends gifted me what is called the "5 Minute Journal". It is designed to take about five minutes in the morning and five minutes in the evening to write an entry focused on gratitude. There is a specific format, when you write three things for which you are grateful, and then three things you hope to happen during the day in the morning. I take about 5-7 minutes in the morning to do this. It is okay to be grateful for the same things and it is okay to hope for the same things as well.

Before I sleep, I conclude by writing three amazing things that happened that particular day and three qualities I like about myself. These can be the same three things or it can be changed each day. When writing the three things for which I am grateful, I always am grateful for people in my life whom I love who love me. Many of us

are surrounded by amazing people, in our family, our workplaces, and our friend circles. They inspire us and teach us. Foremost, we are pediatricians. We have this wonderful opportunity to take care of kids and hopefully, change their lives. We get to support their caregivers and hopefully, help them find some peace of mind. Fundamentally, we have shelter, food, and clothing.

Each evening, I enjoy reflecting on the wonderful things that happened during the day. For me, it can be simple, like having a monarch butterfly glide right past me or seeing a positive message on a bumper sticker. I also have these extraordinary events, such as seeing one of my patients get into the college of his or her choice, or someone being selected for an award. I also enjoy thinking about what has brought me those little moments of joy throughout the day.

Research studies have demonstrated the benefits of maintaining a gratitude journal. A study from San Diego conducted in 2016 demonstrated improvement in biomarkers related to heart failure morbidity. A pilot study from 2023 noted some help in mental well-being. There is a thought that having a regular gratitude practice will evolve our outlook on our life situation. Consistently writing in a gratitude journal will change how you see every event or interaction in your life. The whole idea of silver linings around dark clouds comes to life, and we see this everywhere. As the great Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh so eloquently describes, “When we live in the spirit of gratitude, there will be much happiness in our life”.

[You can find the “Five Minute Journal” by clicking this link.]