

TIP OF THE MONTH

Connection and the Science of Appreciation

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Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States has experienced an epidemic of loneliness. Seventy-six percent of middle-aged Americans reporting moderate to high levels of loneliness.¹ Research shows that loneliness not only negatively impacts our mental well-being but also has serious implications for our physical health far more than even obesity.²

Increasingly, science points to the fact that there are simple things that we can do in the moment, to help us shift from feeling disconnected or neutral to feeling a sense of deep connection. The practice of appreciation helps to build our sense of connection.

Healthy Minds @Work, the *NY Times* award-winning, free app led by Dr. Richard Davidson, translates science into tools to cultivate and measure well-

being in order to create a kinder, wiser, more compassionate world. Their work focuses on four pillars of a healthy mind:



Awareness: practice presence of mind, focus, and self-awareness



Connection: learn skills of kindness, appreciation, and gratitude



Insight: learn to step back and examine your expectation and beliefs



Purpose: learn how to find meaning in your everyday life

Appreciation is a learned skill associated with connection in which we notice the positive in ourselves and others. Appreciation spreads easily; when we appreciate and feel kindness toward others, they feel it and pass it on.

Practicing appreciation at work improves employee-leader relationships, helps team members feel valued, improves morale, and can lead to benefits, including:



Higher levels of perceived social support



Reduced stress



Reduced depression

The Healthy Minds @Work app offers easy-to-follow, 5 - 7 minute practices and proven results. The app is available for everyone to download and use to build skills and improve emotional well-being.

[Learn more creating an account and using the app.](#)

Here are a few simple practices that you can use to help build your own skill of appreciation:

Calendar with Heart:

Look at your calendar for the day

and appreciate something about each person with whom you are going to meet.

Notice when things are going smoothly:

Those moments like when a project goes well, relationships seem easy, and you have space to work on an important project.

Express appreciation with a co-worker or your team member:

Appreciating a colleague's talents or contributions publicly helps to enhance the relationship and it feels good to do. Start a meeting with an appreciative check-in with your team.

Let us be intentional about adding in trainable skills that we know will positively impact our well-being and sense of connection.

If you are finding yourself struggling with your mental/emotional well-being, please reach out to FEAP for a free confidential assessment. [Schedule an appointment](#) or contact us at 434.243.2643.

References:

1. Lee et al, 2018, International Psychogeriatrics
2. Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015 Perspectives on Psychological Science

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