



**FAMILY AND  
CONSUMER SCIENCES**

# **STRENGTHENING OKLAHOMA FAMILIES**

## **Family and Consumer Science News**

**January/February 2022**

### **Taking Small Steps to Health and Wealth in 2022**



The beginning of a new year can sometimes have people thinking about goals or resolutions. Seventy-five percent of Americans make resolutions; about 46% of those concern health and 34% concern money. And yet, 80% of those resolutions are abandoned by the end of January, said Cindy Clampet, retired family resource management specialist for Oklahoma State University Extension.

“The mistakes some people make concerning resolutions is trying to achieve too big a goal, the goal may not be specific enough, it is unrealistic or it involves trying to break a habit ‘cold turkey’ instead of in smaller stages,” Clampet said. “One key to goal success is to make small steps toward the ultimate goal and increase efforts as time/money/and success allow.”

Thinking about where you are now and what your goals for the future might be. Putting a specific number to a goal can make the goal seem impossible to achieve. For example, instead of setting a goal to lose 50 pounds this year, instead set a goal of walking one mile a day. When that becomes habit, increase the distance. Don’t get discouraged if you miss a day – just continue on the next day.

Clampet said the same idea applies to savings goals. “Instead of setting a goal of saving \$1,000 this year, which is just \$83.33 per month, challenge yourself to find \$85 in savings out of your usual expenditures. That’s \$21.25 per week,” she said. “Give up the daily trip to the coffee shop, pack your lunch two or three days per week. Those costs add up quickly. The more ways you think of to save, the quicker you’ll meet your goal.”

Many goals having to do with health and wealth are interconnected. Some habits that make a person unhealthy cost money, such as smoking, drinking or eating out. Cutting back on these expenditures will make you healthier and wealthier.

“It’s important not to bite off more than you can chew. We all like quick gratification and if it seems you’re not reaching your goals quickly, it’s easy to lose interest,” Clampet said. “Using a tool called the step-down principle helps people be more successful and feel less deprived if their spending or calorie consumption is reduced in gradual stages as opposed to eliminating an item completely.”

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## Taking Small Steps to Health and Wealth in 2022, continued from page 1

To visualize the step-down principle, imagine a staircase with four or five steps. On the top is the most expensive or highest calorie option and the bottom step is the least expensive or healthiest option.

The step-down principle is simply a way of getting what you want but not using the most expensive option. For example, you want to treat your family to a night at the movies. There are options to cut the expense. The nighttime movie, plus snacks is the top step. The next step is going to the matinee, which offers discounted tickets and often has snack specials. Another option is going to a theater that features older movies where ticket prices are lower. Better yet, watch the movie on a streaming service you already pay for or borrow a DVD from a friend or the library, and prepare your own snacks at home.

The step-down principal applies to eating out, as well as other discretionary expenses such as clothing or vehicles. Shop resale stores for clothing. Buy a pre-owned vehicle. Eat out four times per month instead of eight. Restaurants often have larger portions, so share an entrée and skip the appetizer and dessert.

“You’re still enjoying the activity, but it’s costing you much less than before,” Clampet said.

Interested in cutting calories? Apply the step-down principal in the kitchen, too. Reduce oil and sugar in baked goods by up to one-third for the same results. Substitute lower fat dairy products for those higher in fat. Try using fruit puree or applesauce in place of the fat in quick-bread and cookie recipes.

These same principles apply to exercise. The top step may be no exercise. The next step down is walking for 15 minutes three times per week. Next try walking for 30 minutes and do 10 minutes of weightlifting four times per week.

“The small steps you take with both health and wealth can add up to big changes over time and is so much easier to achieve than trying to stick to a huge goal that seems unrealistic and unattainable,” Clampet said. “Using the step-down principle may also help you develop some better habits that will carry over year after year.”

## 5 Food Safety Resolutions for 2022



1

**Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before preparing food.**



2

**Rinse all your fruits and veggies before eating them. Use a brush for firm-skinned produce.**



3

**Make sure food has reached a safe internal temperature with a food thermometer.**



4

**Keep a constant fridge temperature of 40 °F or below to keep foods safe to eat.**



5

**Teach your family, friends, colleagues and community how to handle their food safely.**

**Learn more about food safety at [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org)**





## Strengthen Your Brain with Gratitude

Source: University of Arkansas Extension  
Brittney Schrick, Asst. Professor-Family Life Specialist  
September 23, 2021

You have probably been told at some point in your life to “count your blessings.” That phrase is written on door mats, cross-stitched on samplers, sewn onto throw pillows, and sung in songs. It is easy to dismiss the idea as simplistic when it comes to brain health and mental well-being, but you may be surprised by the strength of counting your blessings and intentional gratitude practice.

### What is gratitude?

The definition of gratitude is “the quality or state of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.” Gratitude comes very easily to some people and is less obvious to others. Your personality may lend itself to constant displays or feelings of gratitude, or you may lean more toward finding the negatives or potential problems in a situation. As a group, we need both types of personalities. The positive folks help keep us moving along, looking only at the good things that could happen and finding the good even when things go wrong. The more pessimistic folks help us prepare for things that might go wrong and are often great protectors who we want around when there’s a crisis.

No matter which end of the spectrum you identify with more, everyone can benefit from regular, intentional gratitude practice.

### Meaningful "Thank Yous"

It is very common to say thank you as a matter of habit rather than a true feeling of gratitude. One way to begin intentional gratitude practice is to start paying closer attention to those times we say “thank you.”

1. Start by noticing your ‘thank yous.’ When you say “thank you,” do you really mean it, or is it just a habit? How do you feel when you show or express your thanks to someone in an everyday interaction? Are you already physically moving on to the next thing, or do you make eye contact? Do a quick body scan. Pay attention to what is going on.
2. When you notice the desire to say “thank you,” pause and think about what you are actually thankful FOR. Make a mental note or even express the specific thanks to the person.  
This type of process can help us achieve the **two key components** of practicing gratitude:
  1. We affirm the good things we’ve received.
  2. We acknowledge the role other people play in providing our lives with goodness.Paying attention to why and to whom we’re saying “thank you” can offer great insight into those blessings we’re told to count.

### How can I practice gratitude?

There are lots of ways we can practice gratitude daily.

1. **Keep a gratitude journal.** Establish a daily practice of noticing and reminding yourself of gifts, graces, and benefits you experienced that day. These can be related to and interaction with someone else, something you enjoyed alone, or something you appreciate about yourself. Don’t put too much pressure on yourself to make the gratitude too grand. It could be something as simple as seeing a shooting star or waking up with a lot of energy or as extraordinary as welcoming a new grandchild or making a new friend. Write these down, keep a note in your phone, or think of another creative way to keep a running list of joy. Below, you will find a printable PDF with a long list of gratitude journal prompts to get you started!
2. **Share your gratitude with others.** Researchers at Florida State University found that mismatched levels of gratitude within relationships can contribute to unhappiness. If you appreciate something someone does for you, tell them! They may even start paying more attention to their own blessings too.
3. **Come to your senses.** One of the best ways to savor the moment and focus on the present is to focus on what sensory information your body is taking in. Take a deep breath and focus on what you can see, hear, taste, smell, feel, etc. Even if you have deficits or disabilities in one area, a focus on those senses that bring you joy and information can remind you of the miracle the human body is.
4. **Watch your language.** Paying attention to the words you use and the tone you express those words in can help you practice gratitude. Especially if you tend toward negative talk, reminding yourself to use positive words and focus on what you are grateful for in a situation can lessen anxiety and stress.

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## Strengthen Your Brain with Gratitude, continued from page 3

**5. If you don't feel it, fake it.** Going through the motions of gratitude can sometimes trigger the real feeling. Smiling, writing a thank you note, or telling someone you appreciate what they did can sometimes make you feel more grateful than you did before and help you focus on the kindness.

### What's in it for me?

We have our plans for intentional gratitude practice, but what is the point? What will we gain by showing gratitude on purpose every day?

1. Frequent, intentional gratitude practice helps to train your brain to focus on positives and notice those things that bring you joy rather than all the annoying little things of daily life. Even when something is annoying or troubling, someone who practices gratitude can quickly interrupt the negative thoughts and redirect to something more positive. This helps reduce stress and relieve pain. The parts of the brain associated with gratitude are in the areas where we experience pleasure. They're connected to the parts of the brain that regulate our emotions as well as heart rate and arousal levels. Activating the pleasure centers of your brain reduces stress, and a body that is less stressed tends to be in less pain.
2. Over time, we can even improve health by using the natural brain chemicals released when we socialize or even think about interacting with others positively. It is assumed that the health benefits of gratitude practice come from the way the brain network associated with social bonding and stress relief comes into play when we show gratitude.
3. Researchers at Indiana University found that gratitude practice can help individuals with depression. Consistent gratitude can actually change brain structures and pathways leading to improved mood.

**Note:** Gratitude practice should not be a substitute for medical treatments for depression or pain management. This practice may, however, be useful in addition to other treatments.

Over time, people who practice gratitude report fewer physical symptoms of illness, more optimism, greater goal attainment, decreased anxiety and depression, and other health benefits. Remember the word "practice." Practice is not perfection. Give yourself grace to learn over time, to take breaks, and to stop and start again. This practice is for your benefit, not to prove anything to anyone else.

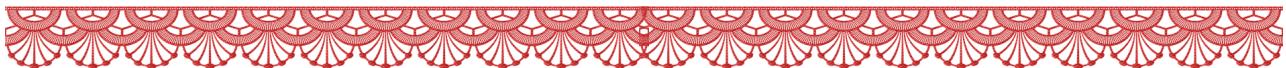
### References & Additional Resources

#### Gratitude Journal Prompts

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"How to practice gratitude." <https://www.mindful.org/an-introduction-to-mindful-gratitude/>



Say "Happy Valentine's Day" with this **Deep Dish Apple Cranberry Pie!**

### Ingredients

- 4 apples (large, peeled, cored, and sliced)
- 2 1/2 cups cranberries (fresh or frozen)
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup flour (all purpose)
- 1 teaspoon apple pie spice
- 1 pie crust (prepared)

### Directions

1. Stir all ingredients (except for the pie crust) together in a medium sized mixing bowl and place in a 10-inch deep dish pie pan.
2. Place one pie crust on top of the fruits. Cut 3 or 4 slits to allow the steam to escape.
3. Bake at 375 degrees for about an hour. Serve warm. Refrigerate any leftovers.

Makes 10 servings.



For nutritional information, visit "What's Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl at this link: <https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/deep-dish-apple-cranberry-pie>



### **“How-To’s of Eating Healthy And Recipe Modification”**

9:00 a.m. Tuesday, January 18th  
Okfuskee Co. OSU Ext. Center  
1201 E. Columbia, Okemah

*Eating Healthy... What does that phrase truly mean? How can you accomplish it? Participants in this one hour program will explore ways to eat healthy and discover possible methods to change the way you cook to make traditional recipes more healthful.*



### **Okfuskee Co. Oklahoma Home and Community Education Executive Meeting**

10 a.m.  
Tues. January 18th  
OSU Ext. Center

*All standing committee chairs, elected county officers and local presidents are encouraged to attend this vital planning meeting. However, all OHCE members are welcome to attend!*

### **“Safe Environments For Caregiving”**

11:00 a.m. Tuesday, February 15th  
Location to be determined  
(Contact the Extension Office for details)

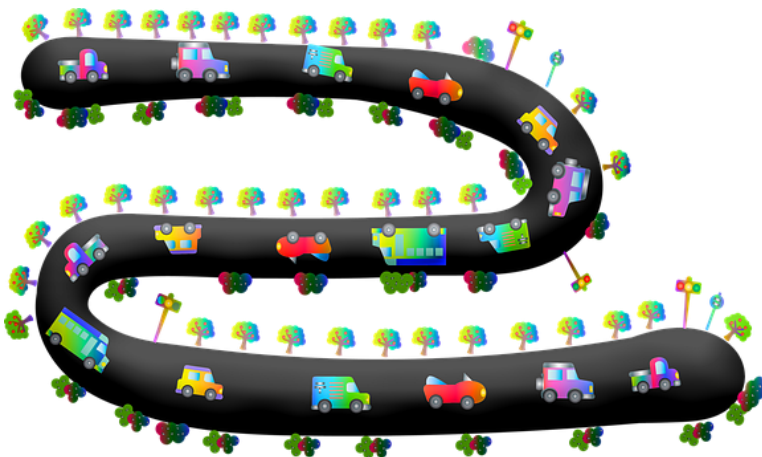
*Join us to learn about:*

- \*How to make your home accessible and safe for caregivers and older adults*
- \*Risk factors in the home environment that impact caregiving*



### **Okfuskee Co. OHCE Spring Meeting** **Tuesday, February 15th** **Location to be determined...**

Watch for details about the fun, food, fellowship, and information that we will have at the county-wide Spring Meeting!



Make Plans to Attend the —

### **Northeast District OHCE Meeting** **Tuesday, March 29th** **Armed Forces Reserve Center** **Broken Arrow, OK**

Okfuskee County OHCE members, take note of and plan to attend the Northeast District OHCE meeting. The meeting usually features interesting and fun workshops, food, fellowship, awards presentations, and the NE District Business Meeting. More details will come later; however, registration is usually do to our county OHCE treasurer by the Spring Meeting (February 15th).





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*Oklahoma Home & Community Education, Inc. is a local and state wide partner with Cooperative Extension which brings the best knowledge from OSU to its members. Join a local OHCE group and enjoy programs that help make Oklahomans be their best. [www.OHCE.okstate.edu](http://www.OHCE.okstate.edu)*



*Family & Consumer Sciences helps communities, families, youth and individuals address issues of health, wealth and well-being through research-based Extension education and programs that are proven to work.*



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or OkfuskeeOSUFCS**

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