

SHOWING GRATITUDE

FOR YOUR TEAM

Throughout the course of the pandemic, there have been news stories highlighting displays of public gratitude, like banging pots and pans for healthcare workers, or placing thank you signs in windows. Displays of public support are heartening but gratitude should come from within the organization also.¹ Ideally, the practice of gratitude would be embedded in your organizational culture as it has wide-ranging positive effects, for the person receiving thanks and acknowledgement, and for the person providing it. This includes creating connectedness and trust and increasing resilience to stress.²

GRATITUDE TIPS

- When you are showing gratitude to a team or the organization as a whole, remember to extend your thanks to those whose contribution may not be as obvious as others. Feeling valued fosters trust and happiness, a benefit the whole team should experience.²
- When showing gratitude to an individual, match the method to the preference of that person. For example, not everyone will appreciate public congratulations. Consider asking staff for their preferences before making any sort of acknowledgement.
- This checklist, developed by Christopher Littlefield, provides ideas to help you express your gratitude in a meaningful way:³
 - **Authentic:** Why am I recognizing this person/team?
 - **Specific:** What did I experience or observe?
 - **Process:** What did it take for them to do what they did?
 - **Impact:** How did what they do impact me, the team, or their client/patient?



INSPIRATION FROM OTHERS

Looking for ways to express your gratitude? Here are some ideas.

Individual or team-level appreciation ideas

Handwritten notes

When extending gratitude to a team or an individual, going the extra mile and sending a personalized handwritten note can be impactful. Remember to consider the tips above to make your message as meaningful and genuine as possible.

Token of appreciation

Small meaningful gifts can be another way to show gratitude. These can take a number of different forms such as a favourite snack, a gift card to a favorite place, a professional development opportunity, or the chance to share a meal together to mark the occasion (even if virtual).

Organization-level appreciation ideas

Wall of thanks

The ICU at Queensway Carleton Hospital, located in Ottawa, Ontario, took all of the thank you cards given by patients, and created a wall of thanks near the staff entrance.⁴ You could take this idea and extend it into the virtual environment by turning thank you notes into screen savers on staff computers.⁵

Gratitude tree

Kaiser Permanente, a healthcare provider in the United States, has used gratitude trees as a way to spread gratitude across their organization. Large paper trees are hung in prominent locations in their hospitals and medical centres, and everyone is encouraged to add post-it note leaves or apples expressing gratitude for the people they work with or the experiences they have shared.⁶

REFERENCES

- 1 Shanafelt, T., J. Ripp, and M. Trockel, Understanding and addressing sources of anxiety among health care professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Jama*, 2020.
- 2 The Greater Good Science Centre at UC Berkley (2018). Gratitude as Medicine: A Survival Kit for Health Care Organizations. Available at: ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/Gratitude_as_Medicine_Survival_Kit.pdf.
- 3 Littlefield, C. (2019). How to Give and Receive Compliments at Work. *Harvard Business Review*. Available at: [How to Give and Receive Compliments at Work \(hbr.org\)](https://hbr.org).
- 4 @QCHOttawa "Our ICU has been collecting every single thank-you card from their patients over the past year and creating a wall full of your thank yous, right near their staff entrance – something to brighten their shift from the moment they walk in." Twitter, 7, Jul 2021, 10:49 a.m., twitter.com/QCHOttawa/status/1412816164238106633.
- 5 O.C. Tanner (2020). How 8 companies are leveraging employee recognition during COVID-19. Available at: [Leveraging Employee Recognition During COVID-19 \(octanner.com\)](https://octanner.com).
- 6 Brozena, C. (2018). How Gratitude Can Reduce Burnout in Healthcare. *Greater Good Magazine*. Available at: [How Gratitude Can Reduce Burnout in Health Care \(berkeley.edu\)](https://berkeley.edu).