

To: Spring 2020 Restorative Justice Group #3

Title: *Gratitude*

I was thinking how hard it is to wake up each day and feel positive about our current, unprecedented situation. We humans were not meant to live in isolation and abandon our communities that bring us in relationship with one another. This time requires all of us to navigate this new reality both individually and with others (at a distance), and perhaps develop some new routines and habits.

We want to offer you some information about a practice that has good research behind it and is integrally tied to what we think about and discover in our Restorative Justice circle...the practice of expressing **Gratitude**. For some of you, this practice is naturally part of how you see the world. In our last circle at the one-word check-out, many of you used language like...*blessed, grateful, appreciative*. But, what if every day, we spent just a few minutes practicing gratitude? How might we see ourselves and the world differently?

In the *Harvard Health Newsletter* (June 2019), where some of this research is discussed, a statement describes how just expressing thanks can lead to people feeling better. The authors then go on to list various ways that we can express gratitude:

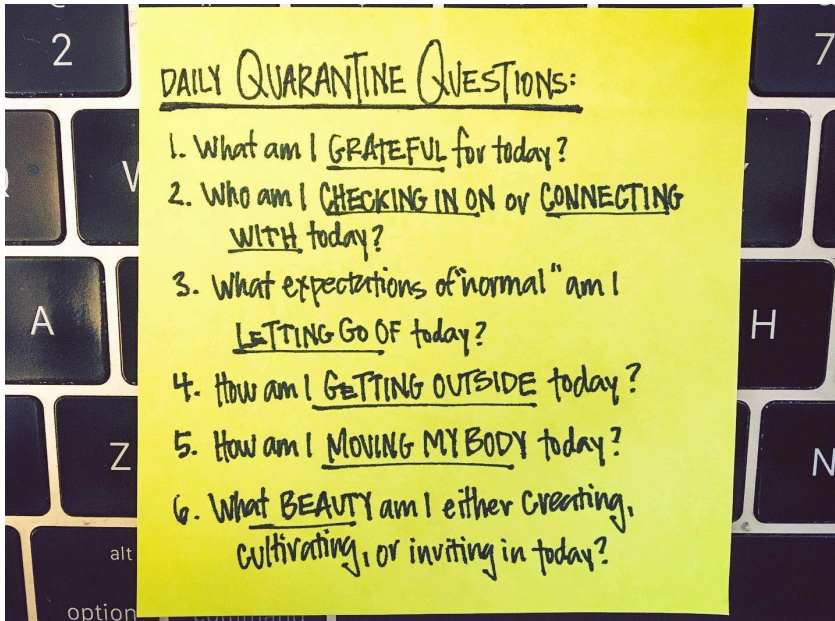
- **Keep a gratitude journal**
- **Write a thank-you note**
- **Thank someone mentally**
- **Count your blessings**
- **Pray**
- **Meditate**

I started a gratitude journal when I was going through a particularly sad time in my life. I tried, although I was not successful every day, to write down **three things for which I was grateful**. The sentences were usually short, encompassing both small and large ideas. I truly believe it helped me to re-set my brain during this challenging time.

So...we encourage you to think about **Gratitude** and try for a week to incorporate one of these ideas into your life. It's a *practice*, so try it out.

We are missing all of you and hoping that you are staying safe and healthy.

~ Ms. Caro-Bruce



Health Benefits of Gratitude

1. Improves sleep quality
2. Decreases blood pressure in those with hypertension
3. Increases your energy levels
4. Reduces stress and depressive symptoms
5. Helps you live longer

A note from the Restorative Justice volunteers outside to the men inside at Fox Lake:

As all of us struggle with the fear and trembling of the virus, we hold all of you in our hearts as you live day to day inside the prison walls and worry constantly about your friends and loved ones on the outside. Please know that we are doing *what* we can, *where* we can, to help. Most importantly, inside *and* outside, we will all keep hope alive.

Reverend Jerry Hancock,