



Family Medicine Moments

November 16, 2023

Introduction: A week to go until Thanksgiving - a time to be thankful. Or better yet - grateful. We all have tough days in health care and health education, and yet they are likely better than the days our most vulnerable patients and neighbours face. So, I want to take a few minutes to express some gratitude below. I often start my classes with students with a brief meditation so that we can let other things go and just be present to each other. This time of year, I do a gratitude meditation. Let this be your opportunity to do your own gratitude meditation. And if the spirit moves you, send it to me to be shared here. Thanks.

Being Grateful

By Hugh Silk

We tend to give and give and give. Yes, occasionally we are given a pat on the back or an award or bonus for our extra efforts. That seems to me to be not enough. I tell my kids and our learners - you have to be your own best evaluator. You get to assess you, every day. Be kind. Take some pride. Reflect on all the good things you do each day.

I attend the Unitarian Universalist church. Our covenant includes the words:

Love is the spirit of this church

And service is our call.

...

and to help one another.

So, I feel gratitude when I serve on the Board of a local food pantry and see us helping 700 semi-rural families in 7 towns. I feel even more gratitude when I see my daughter writing her college essay about her years of service to this pantry and what she learned about the needs of her neighbours and their backgrounds as she puts food into their truck at this time of year.

My gratitude meter is turned way up when I listen to my colleague, Stephanie Connors, a nurse practitioner in our office in the newly minted Worcester Health Care for the Homeless (WHCH - formerly HOAP) give a speech about her colleagues and the place we work and says:

[WHCH is]:

- A place where nurses come to work hours before their normal start time to help bathe and dress a patient, struggling with self-care, so that she may get radiation treatment for a new cancer diagnosis.
- A place where you can find the director in the busy lobby, really listening to everyone's concerns.
- A place where case managers visit patients in the hospital to help them plan next steps and make these scary moments feel a little less scary and a little less lonely.
- A place where a behavioral health clinician skips their lunch break to spend the extra time with someone feeling overwhelmed as the stressors of life without a home pile up too high.
- A place where a doctor prescribes (and provides) painting with canvas and brush as the treatment of choice.
- A place where a nurse practitioner spends time at the shelter or soup kitchen meeting urgent needs and developing relationships.
- A place where the front desk knows the patients so well, they can sound the alarms when something just doesn't seem right.
- A place, where in addition to managing serious acute and chronic conditions, never loses sight of the person sitting in front of them. Recognizing that the real medicine is often the relationships.

Lastly, as I think about 23 UMass Chan students going into family medicine this year and more than half being Gold Humanism Scholars - I am delighted.

Furthermore, as I think back to our recent Annual Department Awards ceremony and how many great things our faculty do clinically, educationally, and in service to our community, I am deeply grateful. So too for all of the staff behind the scenes who make the rest of us look good - thank you.

Let me leave you with this saying from John Wesley:

Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,

In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.

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