

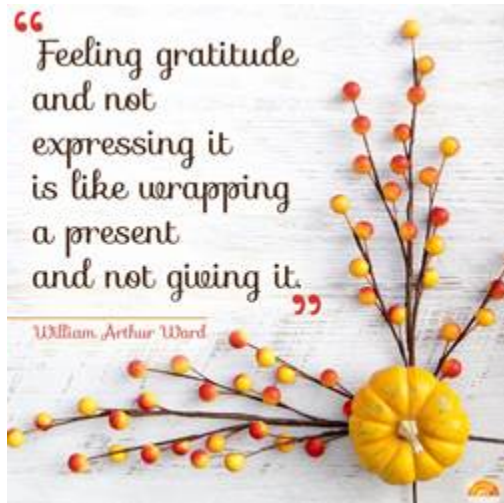


Happy Thanksgiving everyone!

In challenging times (like the past 8 months!), it can be extra difficult to focus on the positive. But, the Thanksgiving holiday provides us an annual opportunity to **step back and reflect on all that we have to be grateful for**. For example:

- *Being at UFCOM means working with some of the smartest, most talented, hardest-working, and most compassionate people on the planet*
- *In today's Town Hall, we heard again about how fortunate we are to have the faculty, staff, and trainees in the Department of Pathology making miracles happen every day to support COVID-19 testing for our community*
- *The broader scientific community recently shared very good news about promising new vaccines and therapeutics, which should be available soon*
- *We have access to technology that can bring us "together" this holiday, even if we are physically apart*
- *The weather forecast for the coming days looks beautiful, allowing us to enjoy the time outside*
- *The year 2020 will soon be coming to an end!*

As you consider your own personal reasons for gratitude, I would encourage you to **share these observations with family, friends, colleagues, peers, and/or a journal**. By giving thanks, you draw attention to the good in your life—which helps to boost energy and improve your mood. By sharing with others, you spread the joy, creating a ripple effect that may have unforeseen benefits. It also helps to improve relationships and may restore a sense of purpose and meaning for those who are struggling.



Take time, also, to acknowledge your own hard work over the past year. Whether your job involves providing direct patient care, educating future health professionals and scholars, conducting important research, supporting team members, completing crucial administrative tasks, managing technology, or training for your future career, you are part of a vital group effort to serve our community and keep our neighbors healthy and safe.

At the AAMC (virtual) conference last week, renowned journalist, Ann Curry, spoke about how—many years from now—**“Your ancestors will speak about this historic pandemic, and about your service on the front lines to help your community.”** She’s absolutely right. And everyone at UFCOM, no matter your role, should feel proud to be contributing in your own way. But importantly, another speaker, Corey Feist (Dr. Lorna Breen’s brother-in-law), reminded us that **“Before you were heroes, you were human.”** And with that in mind, it’s important to think about ways to care for yourself over the coming holidays as well. Former U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, also spoke at the conference about “the healing power of human connection.” He gave **3 recommendations to reconnect and recharge every day:**

1. Put 15 minutes aside DAILY (at work, home, during commute) to have conversations with people we care about.
2. Focus on the QUALITY of time we spend with each other.
3. Do something for others.

“Doing something for others” is an important part of the job description for virtually everyone at UFCOM, but **if you’re looking for another way to help others this holiday season**, consider participating in one of the many opportunities right here at UF/ UF Health. For example:

- *Toys for Tots drive in the Harrell Medical Education Building*
- *Food4Kids Backpack program food drive in the McKnight Brain Institute*
- *Reverse Advent Calendar collection for ElderCare in the Psychiatry Clinic @ Springhill*
- *Clothing/Shoes/Toiletries Collection for all ages at HealthStreet (2401 SW Archer Rd)*
- *Peanut Butter drive at all UF/IFAS Extension offices*
- *(and more!)*

You can also **support a colleague by requesting that the UF Health Shands Arts in Medicine team “Play It Forward”** and surprise them with an uplifting video message. Click here to watch the video and learn more: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=965821503909923>



Finally, **as you make plans to celebrate safely during the upcoming holidays**, take advantage of these resources:

- Guidance for how to have a healthy holiday on the [UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website](#)
- Fun ideas for a “Quarantine Thanksgiving”:
<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/holidays/thanksgiving-ideas/g34450121/quarantine-thanksgiving-ideas/>
- Virtual Thanksgiving activities for families: <https://www.familyeducation.com/thanksgiving-activities-traditions/8-virtual-thanksgiving-activities-for-families>
- Ideas for socializing virtually: <https://wellness.med.ufl.edu/2020/04/01/resources-to-promote-well-being-during-covid-19-outbreak/#socialize>
- If you’re staying in town and looking for some safe ways to entertain yourself, check out the “What’s Good” guide from <https://www.visitgainesville.com/> for suggestions on local socially-distant concerts, events, and activities!

Have a safe and wonderful Thanksgiving everyone!
Stay well,

Lisa J. Merlo, Ph.D., M.P.E.

(Legal Name = Lisa Merlo Greene; she/her/hers)

Director of Wellness Programs, UF College of Medicine

Associate Professor of Psychiatry

University of Florida

352-294-4932

lmerlo@ufl.edu

www.wellness.med.ufl.edu