

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple A Day, Lake Region Health Care's health and wellness program where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I'm Katie Johnson, your host and my guest today is Karen Wulfekuhle, she's a social worker at our cancer care and research center and she is an integral part of this month's Living Well series which is focused on gifts of gratitude and a self-care workshop. Good morning, Karen.

KarenWulfekuhle: Good morning, Katie.

Katie Johnson: Well we always reserve the second Tuesday of the month's program on Apple A Day to talk about the monthly Living Well series which is held the third Monday of every month, so it's coming up this coming Monday, December 17th, and as I mentioned the topic is gifts of gratitude and a couple of self-care workshops are planned. Tell us about why this topic, we've done it before in December, why this topic at this time of the year?

KarenWulfekuhle: I think that we've always kept December as an important month to be reflective and, maybe, sensitive to what's unfolding. December is a real important month for so many people and certainly if your health is compromised or may be dealing with loss, grief, many different things, it's just a nice opportunity to really sit back and reflect and talk about how do we take care of ourself and maybe focus on some well being issues?

Katie Johnson: Right, when life gets so busy, it seems to be the first thing that goes, is stopping-

KarenWulfekuhle: Taking care of ourselves.

Katie Johnson: Yup, stopping to take care of ourselves. So we're going to give people an opportunity to do just that with these self-care workshops. The regular Living Well series is held Monday evenings from 5:45 to 7:00 and that will, again, be the case next Monday, but we've added a second session too, a daytime session so that people who maybe either can't or don't want to go out in the evening also have the opportunity during the day.

KarenWulfekuhle: Correct, we're actually setting this up, too, as it is more of a come as you are, not necessarily a set format, so to speak. There's going to be some really neat healthy snack options with the included recipes. We always are looking for opportunities to provide those options as well. We have massage and then the other thing that's different this time, is we have set up what we're calling the Gifts of Gratitude table.

Katie Johnson: Cool, so if I'm understanding what you're saying it's open house style, it's not come-

KarenWulfekuhle: Absolutely, right.

Katie Johnson: It's not come and sit down and listen for the hour and 15 minutes, this is stop in anytime during-

KarenWulfekuhle: Stay as long as you want-

Katie Johnson: Yup-

KarenWulfekuhle: In and out type of thing.

Katie Johnson: Perfect, either between 11:30 and 1:00, or between 5:45 and 7:00, so this Gifts of Gratitude table, tell me more about that, what is that going to be like?

KarenWulfekuhle: We're going to make a gift. You can come and make a gift and you'll want to, maybe, be able to surprise some of your special friends or neighbors or whoever it is that's going to be receiving this great gift. But it comes with a little frame, there's a gift bag, and you're going to make this. So you get to identify, maybe, what this little saying or maybe it's a special memory that you want to go ahead and write down. Maybe it's a note that you will include, but nonetheless the Gift of Gratitude is an opportunity for you to sit down and write something special and then also be able to have the packaging and the necessary things that you want to do to put it under the tree.

Katie Johnson: Wow, that is a really cool idea to stop and think about something you're grateful about, but then make it into a gift to express that gratitude to someone. This topic of gratitude is really important, we're hearing more and more about it and there's actually research that shows it does impact our health when we take time to be grateful.

KarenWulfekuhle: Absolutely, actually if you decided that you were going to Google anything recently about gratitude, that you're going to see so many things. And the research behind gratitude is relatively new, but the principle behind being grateful is definitely not.

Katie Johnson: Right.

KarenWulfekuhle: The science outlines how gratitude can change people, it can enhance relationships, it actually has remarkable impact on the brain with being able to ... I won't narrate a lot of neuropsychology here, but they talk about improving brain activity to the point where it offers, maybe a surge of these feel good chemicals that you can learn more about dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, it just contributes to a greater connection and closeness and so, again, not only does it improve your sense of well being, but there's actually clinical benefits of this as well.

Katie Johnson: And have I heard that it even impacts your sleep?

KarenWulfekuhle: Correct.

Katie Johnson: Which we know is so important-

KarenWulfekuhle: And the quality of sleep too. So, again, the researchers are really diving deep into this and finding so many significant benefits and, again, the topic in and of itself is much larger than this brief session that we're having now. But I really would encourage people to know that there are so many tools. Each one of us will operationally define what the value of gratitude is for us, and everyone's lives are their own, and their circumstances and currently what they're going through or maybe what they're bringing to the table ... everyone has their own story. And so there isn't one set of rules that is going to be valuable to all of us. And so being grateful is a practice and we learn how to do that and it must meet our own needs. It must be something that is going to improve our own well being.

Katie Johnson: And this gratitude table is going to be a great opportunity to practice it at the self-care workshop, but there's a lot going on in our community. We have the Thrive Resiliency project that has some community initiative. We were talking before the show about the new library actually having some resources specifically aimed at gratitude. Give us some ideas of where people can go to find more ways to learn and practice gratitude.

KarenWulfekuhle: Absolutely, Live Well Fergus Falls really has a great page, definitely jump on, take a look at the community Thrive movement, Natalie [Knudsen 00:06:37], Jason [Bergstran 00:06:39] they're really leading a beautiful initiative within our community and there's four main links to this whole Live Well Fergus Falls, they focus on nutrition, sleep, physical activity, and mental health. And Lake Region Healthcare is definitely jumping in and being part of this as well, but we have a very engaged community interested in this so exploring your own well being, there're many opportunities within our community to do that. Our beautiful new library has dedicated a lovely book list, and so if you're interested in learning more about gratitude, courage, resiliency, joy, the list is quite extensive actually, it's a great time of year to find a good book.

Katie Johnson: Yeah.

KarenWulfekuhle: And there's a lot of great book clubs out there as well, so again, tap into features like Live Well Fergus Falls, check into our own page here at Lake Region Healthcare and you're going to find some really good resources.

Katie Johnson: I have been part of the Thrive Three Good Things that's going on right now, so I get a text reminder every day at the end of the day reminding me to write down three things I'm grateful for and doing that for two weeks, hopefully this will become a habit but I can tell you, I find myself going through the day looking for

things that I'm going to want to put on my list, so I think it does just heighten that awareness of how much we have to be grateful for-

KarenWulfekuhle: Absolutely.

Katie Johnson: And it's fun to have to narrow it down to three things.

KarenWulfekuhle: Absolutely.

Katie Johnson: When you think about it.

KarenWulfekuhle: I think it's important to also mention too, certainly a practice of being grateful does not negate the heaviness that happens in one's life. Okay? And I think that the ability to be grateful and to know empathy is a very powerful thing. And so, again, when we practice these type of things, there's also that very important balance of understanding how heavy life can feel and how important it is for you as someone who's sharing time with someone else, is just to acknowledge that maybe their day is very heavy. Maybe something that they're experiencing is far more significant than what you have the insight to know about. And so I think just being mindful ... I always think about this when I am working in my role at the oncology center, it's so important to listen with your eyes, and I think that is something that I just need to be mindful of for my own self, personally and professionally, so, again, I think this gratitude movement is so powerful and yet knowing empathy for circumstances and situations is also so incredible.

Katie Johnson: Absolutely and it's truly the reason behind saying we need some self care, because life is heavy sometimes and regardless of what that heaviness might be, it's really important to take time to take care of yourself and to look for those things that you can be grateful for despite and amidst the heaviness and the darkness so we hope everyone will be able to join us on Monday December 17th, again it's the Gifts of Gratitude and self-care workshops as our December Living Well topic. Two different times to choose from, stop in anytime between 11:30 and 1:00, or between 5:45 and 7:00pm. Right in the main clinic lobby at 111 West Vernon and again this is a series the third Monday of every month, check out our calendar at LRHC.org for every months' topic and series but for December we hope you'll join us for some gifts of gratitude and self-care. Karen Wulfekuhle thanks for joining me today and looking forward to what you're going to put together for our folks on Monday.

KarenWulfekuhle: Thank you so much, have a great day.

Katie Johnson: Karen Wulfekuhle and Katie Johnson on Apple a Day Today inviting you to the Living Well series Monday December 17th and reminding you there is so much to do here, stay healthy for it. Have a great day.