



grat·i·tude /ˈgradə,t(y)o̯od/

A feeling of appreciation or thanks; the state of being grateful*

BY SHEILA BUSH



We closed out 2020 believing we had all truly endured the worst year ever, yet it wasn't long into 2021 before we realized that things would maybe get worse before they would get better. Reflecting on 2021 could leave many of us feeling depleted and searching for a dark corner to tend to painful wounds of moral injury.

No one would cast blame if we did just find said dark corner and stay there. From the onset of this pandemic a bright light was cast on science and medicine with unrealistic expectations for immediate answers, solutions and cures. When science did provide answers and solutions, attacks were launched and the moral characters of our physicians and scientists were questioned. All of this in addition to the personal struggles everyone has suffered this year with families and communities in turmoil over the all-consuming politics of this time. So, yes, that dark corner is justified and we all understand the desire to seek its retreat.

But hiding won't fix the challenges we face. In fact, that tempting dark corner will likely just make things worse. The great research professor Brené Brown would maybe tell us that right now, inside of all of this suffering and strife, is the best time to employ gratitude. Let's take this moment to lean into understanding the meaning and power of gratitude.

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The Oxford English Dictionary defines gratitude as, "the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness." Robert Emmons, perhaps the world's leading scientific expert on gratitude, says gratitude has two key components. The first component is an affirmation of goodness and the second an acknowledgement that the

sources of this goodness are outside of ourselves. Gratitude encourages us not only to appreciate the goodness in these gifts but to repay them and be the source of goodness for someone else. The sociologist Georg Simmel called this "the moral memory of mankind."

We are hopeful that 2022 will be the year we will return to an in-person annual meeting where stories can be shared and relationships renewed.

WMS is looking to 2022 with hope and ... you guessed it, a focus on gratitude. We have so much to be grateful for. We can be a source of goodness within our membership. We can extend the best of ourselves to our community and in return, we can focus on the kindness that comes back to us from our community.

We are hopeful that 2022 will be the year we return to an in-person annual meeting where stories can be shared and relationships renewed. Next year will be a year to celebrate as we commemorate the 25th anniversary of Wyoming joining to add the final "W" to make WWAMI what it is today.

Watch for big news this coming spring about moving the traditional WMS annual meeting from summer to the fall of 2022. WMS is partnering with the University of Washington School of Medicine, University of Wyoming and WWAMI to throw a party for the ages in Laramie culminating with a formal, black-tie gala to honor those who made WWAMI possible, those who continue to support its success and the incredible alumni practicing medicine and caring for patients across Wyoming. We hope you'll join us as we celebrate our past accomplishments and plan an even brighter future for our state.

*From the Merriam-Webster Dictionary

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