

10 Suggestions for Improved Positivity and Well-Being

Our lives are often filled with negativity, stress, and threats to our emotional well-being. Research in neuroscience and positive psychology shows that happiness and positivity activate brain regions associated with learning and lead to positive outcomes across all areas of life. Studies also indicate that increased positivity makes us three times more creative, 23% less fatigued, and 31% more productive.

Based on research reviewed and presented by Dr. David Schramm of Utah State University, here are 10 simple ways to become happier and more positive:

- Practice gratitude.
- Smile more — it's contagious.
- Stay active through regular exercise.
- Use your character strengths.
- Start each day with something positive.
- Find your flow through activities that fully engage you.
- Be mindful and pay attention to the present.
- Practice kindness.
- Let go of grudges and forgive.
- Cherish and nurture friendships.

Consider incorporating one or more of these practices into your daily life to improve your overall happiness and well-being.

Resources: Cheri Burcham, Family Files Blog, March 2023; Dr. David Schramm, Utah State University.

Discover the Power of Nutrition this National Nutrition Month

March is National Nutrition Month! Celebrate by trying one of these challenges each week of March:

- **Power your day with nutrition:** Choose healthful foods from all food groups. Try two meals this week that include all five food groups.
- **Find advice backed by science:** Reach out to your local registered dietitian to meet your unique needs, take a nutrition class with University of Illinois Extension, or read an article on Illinois Extension's [Live Well Eat Well blog](#) or on [eatright.org](#).
- **Stay nourished on any budget:** See how many meals you can make this week using only what is in the kitchen.
- **Feel good with healthy habits:** Wash hands with soap and water before every meal and use a food thermometer to test food such as meat, so no one gets sick.

Source: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2026.

LAYERED BEAN DIP



Servings: 6

Ingredients:

- 1 15-ounce can of pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1/4 cup taco sauce
- 1 teaspoon chili powder (optional)
- 1 cup shredded, reduced-fat Monterey Jack or Cheddar cheese
- Optional: shredded lettuce, chopped tomatoes, sliced green onions

Nutrition information per serving: 120 calories; 3.5 g total fat; 410 mg sodium; 12 g carbohydrate; 3 g dietary fiber; 8 g protein.

Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Mash the beans in the bowl.
3. Add the taco sauce and chili powder to the beans and mix well.
4. Spread bean mixture evenly on a plate and sprinkle shredded cheese over it.
5. Top with lettuce, tomatoes, and green onions, if desired. Wash produce under cool running water beforehand.
6. Serve with low-fat crackers, tortilla chips, or raw vegetable sticks.