

Happy Spring!

Even in the northern US, we are noticing signs of spring. Spring brings with it several notable days. Many recognize May 1 as International Worker's Day,¹ when workers often hold events to advocate for improved working conditions. May Day also has a long tradition of a time for celebrating the return of spring, going back to the ancient Celtic holiday of Beltane.² Although rare, some places still hold a maypole dance, where the dancers move so as to braid ribbons around a pole.³



Mother's Day

Mother's day is celebrated in various parts of the world to express respect, honor and show love towards mothers—women described as bringing up their children with care and affection. The day honors the contribution of mothers, acknowledges the efforts they make, the maternal bonds and the role of mothers in our society. Our mother plays an important role helping to create wellness habits as a baby toddler, young adult and adult. Use this day as an opportunity to show appreciation for your mother and grandmothers.

You can pick your friends, but you can't pick your family. Friends come and go but family is forever. Many people have someone in their life who may not be a biological relative but is a mother figure or a grandmotherly support. When we consider mothers, we recognize that anyone can take on the role of a mother—they don't have to be biologically related to you.

Our mothers do a lot for us and it's important to take the time to recognize it. Although we may go through issues with our family, especially our mothers, they are there through thick and thin. You can also use this month to show appreciation to people who are like mothers to you. Pause and reflect on the people who have helped or do help you in your life to conquer obstacles or challenges.

The modern holiday of Mother's Day⁴ was first celebrated in 1908, when Anna Jarvis held a memorial for her mother at St Andrew's Methodist Church in Grafton, WV. In 1914, Woodrow Wilson signed a proclamation designating Mother's Day, held on the second Sunday in May, as a national holiday to honor mothers. But celebrating mothers goes back even further than that. In fact, in ancient Greece, Mother's Day was used to celebrate Greek goddesses. It just goes to show that you can celebrate all motherly people—real and spiritual—who have a place in your life.

The most traditional Mother's Day flower is the carnation. Pink carnations represent gratitude and love, while red carnations signify admiration.

A mother influences her child and, in the long run, society. As she strives to nurture and teach, she makes the world better.



A Memory by William Latin

White carnations are traditional flowers to give or wear in remembrance of a mother who is no longer living. For example, my own grandmother passed away last year and, to honor her this year, I plan on bringing white carnation to her gravesite.

It's important to remember mothers who are no longer here. My mother and grandmother have been a huge influence on my life. They are empathic, caring, kind, and loving. In turn, they have passed those qualities on to me. I wouldn't be the person I am today without my mother and grandmother. Not only have they made the world a better place, they made me a better person.

Caring and Affection

While mothers symbolize caring, not everyone has experienced a caring and affectionate family as a child. Certainly, a warm and caring parent contributes to life-long resilience but many people who grow up in tough environments can become strong and kind adults.

Caring and affection is something that will boost your wellness when you receive it, but also when you give it to others. Think of these "4Bs"⁵ for wellness:

Being: Feeling ground, recognizing and appreciating one's strengths, with awareness and self-compassion for one's limitations.

Belonging: Feeling a part of a community, interest group, or connection with others who have had similar experiences and/or have similar views.

Believing: Having a set of guiding principles or values and a sense of the purpose of life.

Benevolence: Being kind and generous to others, whether that's with time, money, support, or just sharing a needed smile with someone who crosses your path on an ordinary day.

What do you do during a typical day or week that contributes to these important areas for wellness and resilience? What can you add or strengthen in your life to have a little more of these Bs?



Cinco de Mayo

Another great holiday in the month of May is Cinco de Mayo. While the holiday is really celebrated in order to honor the victory of the Mexican Army over the French Empire, a lot of people use this day to celebrate Mexican culture.



If you're someone who doesn't get outside your comfort zone very often, try giving Mexican cuisine a try. You may already like tacos, burritos and guacamole. While these are the common dishes eaten in the United States, in Mexico, Cinco de Mayo is celebrated with different foods⁶ like *chalupas* and *chiles en nogada*. Chalupas are fried tortilla shells topped with shredded beef and salsa. Chiles en nogada which is fried pepper topped with walnut sauce. The dish includes all the colors of the Mexican flag—red, white, and green. So, if you're up for it, celebrate May 5 by trying something a little different!

References and Resources

Thanks to William Latin for his contributions this month on Mother's Day and Cinco de Mayo. The flower photo in column 1 on page 1 was taken by Jill Shell on the island of Medeira, Portugal and is used with permission from Peggy Swarbrick. Other illustrations are listed online as free for reuse without attribution, and are from various sources, including openclipart.org, and pixabay.com

Here are sources for our stories to give you more information:

1 https://www.iww.org/history/library/misc/origins_of_mayday

2 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beltane>

3 Use your search engine to find a video of a maypole dance, or go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MVgMhcu7PQ>

4 <https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/mothers-day>

5 The 4Bs are from a 2003 article on psychological and social aspects of resilience by Dr. Saul Levine that you can access here:

6 <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/what-to-really-eat-on-cinco-de-mayo-50767054/>

