

Five *on* Friday

Musings on Mental Health

Grateful

By Kathleen M. Pike, PhD
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Dena Nisenfeld Forster died this past Sunday. We buried her on Tuesday. Beloved by family and friends, I had the good fortune to call her my mother-in-law. But she was so much more than that. Teacher. Mentor. Confidant. Friend. She was a voracious reader with a passion for learning. She devoted her heart, mind, and energy to growing and caring for herself and others with an ever-evolving understanding of mental health and embrace of spirituality.



Dena cultivated and honed a practice of gratitude over the course of her lifetime. When I search “Dena Forster + gratitude” in my email, 253 results come up. “Dena Forster + thank you” produces no less than 1158 results. And that’s just from the past few years. Dena knew personally what research supports about the link between a gratitude practice and mental health, including:

- 1. enhanced optimism and sense of overall wellbeing,**

2. [better sleep,](#)
3. [reduced stress and symptoms of depression,](#)
4. [greater social support,](#)
5. [higher life satisfaction.](#)

There is so much I could say about Dena, and I will write more about this extraordinary woman in time. I begin by saying, "I am so grateful. Thank you, Dena."