

Be Grateful, Give Thanks and Discover Life

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“If the only prayer you said in your life was “thank you,” that would suffice.” -- Meister Eckhart

Gratitude, such a simple word but one rarely used appropriately. It can be one of the most challenging things to do or say. Why is that? Consider for a moment how often you use the word and really mean it, not just as a habit, when someone does something for you. How often do you pause and reflect on all the wonderful things you have in your life that you are thankful for?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are you fit and healthy?
- Are you surrounded with loving and supportive family and friends?
- Are you able to make decisions for yourself?
- Have you the ability to educate and learn?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you already have plenty to be grateful for.

Gratitude is an appreciation of what you have and being truly thankful for it all. But it is so much more than that – it is an attitude toward life. This attitude is the blueprint for your life. A life devoid of thankfulness is a life devoid of love and passion. Without it, nothing new can enter your life. If you don’t appreciate what you have, how can you receive anything more?

What does this all mean? It means that whatever you are waiting for (abundance, happiness, contentment, success), it will come to you only when you are ready to receive it with an open and grateful heart. Only then can you truly experience the gift you have been given. Even in pain and suffering, there are lessons to learn if you are open and grateful for the experience. That is why some of the most profound lessons have come in times of suffering. Nelson Mandela said, "There is no easy walk to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountaintop of our desires."

Being grateful reminds you to focus on what is good in your life. Too many times, the focus is on what you don't have which creates feelings of resentment and bitterness. Life is never as bad as it seems. It is all about your perception. It is your attitude that created the environment you have. Hence, focus on the good in your life and what you want to create and you shall receive, as the Law of Attraction states.

The Buddha said: "Let us rise up and be thankful, for if we didn't learn a lot today, at least we learned a little, and if we didn't learn a little, at least we didn't get sick, and if we got sick, at least we didn't die; so, let us all be thankful."

The following information offers simple suggestions on how you can bring more gratitude in to your life:

Use Gratitude Every Day

Every morning when you wake up, be grateful that you are seeing another day, as there are many people who won't. This simple ritual each day will change your attitude and transform your life. One of the great truths is that life itself is a gift. Being grateful for this existence and this experience is independent of situations and circumstances. You can choose this attitude towards your life. As you practice this more and more, it becomes part of your reality and it encompasses all that you do. As you move towards 'being' grateful all the time you activate the Law of Attraction because it becomes a part of you and you will attract the circumstances you want.

Use Positive Language

Don't use words like 'but', 'at least', 'in the future'. (For example, 'I am happy but.', 'At least I have..'). These suggest a superficial form of gratitude. You know you should be content but it's not enough. You temporarily feel grateful but your attitude is artificial because you want more. There is nothing wrong with wanting more but your attitude determines your sincerity. You can't be both grateful and want more at the same time. Instead use statements like 'I am grateful for this experience, this opportunity, for my family, for my friends.' These statements imply gratitude without saying you want more.

For the next week, eliminate the words 'but', 'at least' and 'in the future'. At the end of that week, ask yourself the following two questions:

- How challenging was that for me? And why?
- Did I learn anything from this experience?

Say It Like You Mean It

You have to mean what you say, feel it and believe it. "I am grateful for this experience, I've learnt so much." You can't say this and then turn around and say, "Why is this happening to me, I don't deserve this." This implies that you are not grateful and don't believe what you are saying. You are just saying it for the sake of it. At first you may not believe the statement but if you repeat it often enough you will eventually come to mean it understand and believe it. The more you do it, the better you will feel. As the saying goes, "fake it until you believe it".

Do It with Actions

Back up your words with actions. If you are grateful for having the experience, don't harp on the negatives - learn your lesson and move on. If the same experience keeps repeating itself you are not learning your lesson. You are focusing only on the negatives and you are not choosing to see the positives. There are always positives in any situation. It is up to you to find them.

Choose a situation in your life that you are not entirely happy with. What can you do to improve it? Before you say there is nothing I can do, stop and reassess the situation. Detach yourself by stepping outside your reality and put yourself in the other person's shoes. There is always something you can do even if it is to adjust your attitude. For the next week, see this particular situation you have chosen with a different perspective. How do you feel at the end of the week? There will always be different opinions, different realities – neither is right or wrong, just unique in its own way.

In conclusion, pause for a moment and remember gratitude is a way of life. It keeps you centered and wards off resentment and negativity by focusing on the hopeful. As John F. Kennedy said, "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

Exercises for Further Consideration and Exploration

You might like to consider the following exercises in order to see a different perspective:

- Keep a gratitude journal – at the end of each day write a page on everything you were grateful for that day.

- Make a goal to stop complaining about one thing each day. Share it with a friend so it makes it more real and binding.

- Write thank you notes (not just after receiving a gift) – in this day and age of technology, it is rare to receive such notes.

- Take regular walks in nature to appreciate the beauty and calmness. Notice the surroundings and breathe in the fresh air.

- Spend a day volunteering. You will take plenty from it.

- Give yourself a treat – it doesn't need to be expensive.

- Take the time to say hello to your elderly neighbour, and ask if they need support with anything.

Acknowledgements and Further Reading

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Author Profile: Anna Cairo from Life Balance Coaching has a special interest and focus in the areas of life/work balance and women. She is passionate about educating and creating sustainable change through a number of proven ways that promotes clear focus and direction.

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