

On the Importance of Gratitude

There are very few things more influential in our success than the practice of being grateful - having an attitude of gratitude. It affects our perspective, our energy, our ability to see the good, and our effectiveness at creating the future we want.

Being grateful means enjoying and being appreciative of the things we have in our lives. Don't get me wrong. It's good to strive to be better and to have more success, but it's just as important to be happy for and to appreciate those people, things, and circumstances that exist in our life at this very moment. When we look for ways to be grateful, we find the opportunities that others miss. Often we take for granted much in our life because we're either blind to their existence or don't even realize that we have something that others - sometimes many others - don't have. Let me share a personal experience with you to illustrate my point.

A number of years ago, I was disillusioned with the United States and ended up with an opportunity to live and work overseas. I was thrilled and it thoroughly turned out to be the experience of a lifetime. During my three years abroad I met people from all around the world - people from different cultures who had different views and beliefs. They all, of course, came from different countries with different governments, different customs, and different laws. I began to learn about the rest of our world and how people live. Little by little I came to a profound realization. I slowly came to realize that for all its faults, the United States is the greatest country in the world. (My apologies to my readers in other countries. You are welcome to draw the same conclusions about your own country.) I don't agree with many of the policies our government has nor do I agree with a number of the actions our government has taken. However, that being said, I am extremely grateful for everything we have here in the U.S. I'm grateful for the freedoms we have (and the challenges they bring). I'm grateful for the wisdom that the founders of our country had in structuring our government with checks and balances, with freedom of speech, and with the separation of church and State. Even in the face of all the dysfunction that exists in the U.S., all the political maneuvering that exists and the occasional dishonesty that surfaces, I'm grateful for what we have here in the U.S.

Having gratitude affects how I experience life.

When a person is grateful for what they have - even though it's often not all they want to have - they gain the ability to see the positive in pretty much every circumstance. And that, in turn, allows them to see the opportunities that exist. When a person doesn't have an attitude of gratitude they tend to see only the obstacles. When a person isn't grateful, they tend to be unhappy much of the time because they only see what they don't have. When a person only focuses on what they don't have or what they haven't yet attained, then they can't help but be frustrated, stressed, regularly dissatisfied and generally unhappy.

Someone who is grateful and appreciative for what they have - even though striving for more success and greater heights - is generally happier, is more positive, sees more solutions and opportunities, and is enjoyable to be around. In short, they enjoy the experiences of their life and they become someone that others want to be around.

Being grateful is an acquired habit - a habit that pays wonderful dividends.

Learn to be thankful for the sun and the wind and the rain. Be grateful for the people in your life that you enjoy. Be grateful for the people in your life that are challenging - they help you grow and help you appreciate the positive people even more. Be grateful for the taxes that you pay, for they are a result of making a great income. Be grateful for your health - good or poor. Don't take good health for granted for it allows you to do the things you enjoy. Be grateful for poor health, because it helps you appreciate the importance of regaining health

and helps you appreciate the challenges of those worse off than you. Years ago when I first started my coaching practice, I used to be frustrated when I lost a client because of a setback in their life. Now, instead, I feel grateful that I don't have to go through the challenges that they do. Be grateful for having the knowledge or skill or drive to bounce back from a setback - not everyone has that ability.

Be grateful for being alive to experience a new day - for the ability to just enjoy the simpler pleasures in life like a brilliant sunrise, a spectacular sunset, bright stars in the night sky, a cool breeze, and the fresh air after a storm.

Having an attitude of gratitude will elevate your energy and your outlook, and will propel you towards ever more success.

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