

**IN THIS
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*"Silent gratitude
isn't much use
to anyone."*

~ Gladys Brownyn
Stern

*"Feeling gratitude
and not expressing
it is like wrapping
a present and not
giving it."*

~ William Arthur
Ward

The Power of 'Thank You'

I recently read a fascinating article in the October issue of Reader's Digest that has caused me to reflect on the importance of gratitude in our daily lives. So, given it is the month of Thanksgiving, I thought it might be appropriate to spend some time discussing the impact of gratitude on our relationships, health and careers.

The Reader's Digest article discusses some interesting research carried out at the University of California and the University of Miami. Researchers asked one group of study participants to focus daily on the blessings in their lives and another group to focus on the hassles in their lives. The researchers then studied the quality of the participants' lives on a number of factors. They found amazing benefits in the group who practiced gratitude daily.

A list of just a few of the benefits found in the gratitude group include:

- more optimism
- more energy
- more enthusiasm
- increased rates of exercise
- fewer illnesses

Additional research evidence indicates that grateful people

also live longer than non-grateful folks. A 2001 study found a strong connection between the amount of gratitude expressed by a group of nuns early in their lives and how long they eventually lived.



The nuns who had expressed the most positive emotional content early in their lives lived an average of 6.9 years longer than the nuns who expressed the least positive emotion. This relationship between gratitude and longevity is even more interesting given that it occurred over a 60-year time-span – tracking the nuns from the time they were in their twenties, to their deaths (between the ages of 75-95).

While these studies have focused more on the individual benefits of cultivating a conscious emphasis on gratitude, expressing appreciation is also a powerful factor in our relationships with others, particularly at work.

When it comes to gratitude at work, I often hear people say that they don't need to be thankful or show gratitude for a job well done, because their employees/colleagues are *getting paid* to do their jobs and are *supposed* to work hard. If you agree with this statement, I would ask you to think for a moment about your favourite professional sports team.

The players on that team are likely getting paid much more money than your employees and colleagues and you still cheer them on 'just to do their jobs'. Think of how different the atmosphere would be at a stadium if all the fans sat there quietly watching the game and never made any noise, except to boo when a mistake was made. Do you think the morale and the success of the team might decrease?

But doesn't this scenario describe (cont'd on page 2)

~ The Power of Thank You (cont'd from page 1) ~



the typical situation in our workplaces? People go to work every day, put their hearts and souls into their jobs, and rarely receive encouragement or appreciation. Often, they only receive feedback from their managers or colleagues when they have done something wrong.

However, the business case for expressing gratitude and appreciation at work is pretty clear: studies of highly innovative companies also tend to have higher levels of employees saying ‘thank you’ to each other. In fact, researchers have found that work teams that have a positive:negative interaction ratio of at least 3:1 (3 positive/appreciative interactions for every 1 negative interaction) are significantly more productive than other teams where appreciation is not expressed as frequently.

Additional studies have shown that a number of other factors are also connected to the amount of gratitude expressed in organizations, including: employee turnover, profitability, customer retention, job satisfaction, and loyalty.

In my opinion, it’s just as important to express gratitude ‘up’ the organizational hierarchy. When was the last time you said ‘thanks’ to your bosses/managers or congratulated *them* on a job well done? Again, we make assumptions about expressing gratitude and often avoid saying thanks to those we work for in case it is viewed as ‘sucking up to the boss’. However, this means that those in positions of power rarely receive appreciation for the work *they* do every day.

Gratitude tends to be a reciprocal emotion – *to receive it, you first need to give it away.*

Are you ready to experience the benefits of an attitude of gratitude? If you are ready to start making some positive changes in your life, join me in this month’s *Live Your Strengths* Challenge!

“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.”

~ John F Kennedy

“When you are grateful fear disappears and abundance appears.”

~ Anthony Robbins

Live Your Strengths Monthly Challenge

The following are some ideas to put you on the path to gratitude. Start by picking a couple of ideas that appeal to you the most and run with them!

- Keep a gratitude journal. Each night, make a list of three things that you are thankful for in life. Record these thoughts in as much detail as possible and begin to look for patterns in what makes you most grateful.
- Every day, look for opportunities to thank someone for something that you might otherwise take for granted. This may be a simple verbal ‘thank you’ or a quick handwritten note. Just think of the possibilities—the server at your favourite café, the drycleaner who always takes such good care of your clothes, your child’s daycare provider—have fun with it!
- Aim for the 3:1 ratio in your conversations with your colleagues at work. Pay attention to how many times you say ‘thank you’ or express appreciation for the work they do vs the number of times you correct them or critique their efforts. (Hint: this is also a good idea to try with family and friends!)
- Send a handwritten ‘thank you’ note to someone each day. An e-greeting works if you are pressed for time, but handwritten notes show that you went to a greater effort and have a greater impact on the recipient.
- Instead of the usual ‘how are you?’ greeting, encourage gratitude in others by asking them about the best thing that happened to them that day.

Could you use some guidance with this month’s challenge? Call Denise for a free 30-minute coaching session. Start living *your* strengths!

Do you have suggestions for upcoming newsletters or success stories you want to share? Contact Denise denise@insearchofexcellence.ca