

## THE POWER OF GRATITUDE: At-a-Glance

“I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder.”

G. K. Chesterton

The emotion of gratitude includes awareness of a positive benefit that has come from an outside source and was not necessarily earned or deserved<sup>1</sup>. Opening yourself to experiencing gratitude and intentionally expressing it to others benefits everyone.

**Experiencing and Expressing Gratitude:** Writing a “gratitude journal.”<sup>2</sup> Writing a “gratitude letter.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Benefits<sup>4</sup>:**

1. Measureable improvements in your mood.
2. Better physiological health (heart rhythms and sleep patterns)
3. Fewer physical symptoms (headaches/colds)
4. Increased performance at work (cognitive functioning)
5. Higher states of alertness, determination, and energy
6. Sense of being connected to others
7. Expressions of gratitude by one person tend to motivate others to express gratitude thus having a virtuous cycle started, as well as reciprocal behavior.

### **Gratitude Journal**

Write a list of 3 - 5 items each day for which you are grateful and do not repeat any item previously listed. . Do this every day for three weeks. Examples are endless:

- a successful finish to a project
- a meeting that went well
- a patient that left an office visit feeling like they were listened to
- a co-worker who smiled when you walked in the door
- a warm, spring day



### **Gratitude Letter**

Write a letter to someone you have never properly thanked detailing the kindnesses they have provided to you. Make an appointment for a gratitude visit and read the letter aloud to the person you are thanking.

- Research shows that for a full month after a “gratitude visit,” happiness levels tend to go up, while boredom and other negative feelings go down.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Emmons & Richard McCullough. (2003). “Counting Blessings Versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life.” *Journal of Personal Social Psychology*, 84, 377-389.

<sup>2</sup>Kim Cameron. (2008). *Positive Leadership*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

<sup>3</sup>Christopher Peterson. (2006). *A Primer in Positive Psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Kim Cameron. (2008). *Positive Leadership*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. and Robert A. Emmons (2007). *Thanks: How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

## **How a Little Can Go a Long Way<sup>5</sup>**

“A mere expression of thanks more than doubled the likelihood that helpers would provide assistance again...” – a jump of 30% or more occurred in these experiments.

“A single gratitude expression yielded an increase of 15% in the average amount of time spent helping.”

The power of “‘Thank You’ can motivate, validate, and give positive reinforcement. ‘Thank you’ for the ordinary as well as the extraordinary can enhance the [worker’s] interpersonal relationships immeasurably...”<sup>6</sup>

## **Ways to Express “Sincere” Thanks<sup>7</sup>**

1. Don’t confine “Thank you’s” to those who expect it.
2. Say “Thank You” regularly.
3. Provide positive feedback as soon as possible.
4. Share copies of compliments with supervisors.
5. Copy compliments for the permanent record.
6. Develop the art of saying “Thank You” gracefully.
7. Maximize the value of a “Thank You” by putting it in writing!
  - A written thank you has lasting value since it can be read, reread, and shared with family or friends. While a verbal comment can often express the same sentiments, a written note has lasting value and should follow up the delivery of a verbal “thank you” to maximize the effect. A handwritten “thank you” on a restaurant bill by the server elicited about 11 percent higher tips<sup>8</sup>.



<sup>5</sup> Adam M. Grant and Francesca Gino. (2010). “A Little Thanks Goes a Long Way: Explaining Why Gratitude Expressions Motivate Prosocial Behavior.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98, 946-955.

<sup>6</sup> Ruth Davidhizar. (2005). “The Benefits of Saying ‘Thank You’ for the Ordinary Rather than the Extraordinary.” *Journal of Practical Nursing*, 55, 27-30.

<sup>7</sup> Ruth Davidhizar. (2005). “The Benefits of Saying ‘Thank You’ for the Ordinary Rather than the Extraordinary.” *Journal of Practical Nursing*, 55, 27-30.

<sup>8</sup> Kim Cameron. (2008). *Positive Leadership*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.