



Gratefulness is the key to a happy life that we hold in our hands, because if we are not grateful, then no matter how much we have we will not be happy - because we will always want to have something else or something more. Brother David Steomdal-Rast

When was the last time you said thank you? You have probably uttered it half a dozen times already today. "Thanks" to the barista who make your coffee, "Thank You" to the colleague who got your printout off the printer, "Ta" to your partner for passing the breakfast cereal. Was your thank you an automatic response drummed into you as "manners" by your parents, or was it gratitude that you truly felt?

Gratitude is a subject that has received a lot of attention from researchers in recent years. This research is revealing that the more gratitude you feel the happier you are. In fact research shows that gratitude can increase happiness by up to 25%. Robert Emmons a key researcher in the area of gratitude has also found that those that deliberately cultivate gratitude exercise more, sleep more, have more expectations of good things happening, had fewer physical pain symptoms, helped others more, and had more friends. All things I would be grateful to have more of in my life.

Give it a try. With your next "thank you" pause, really look the person in the eye and deliberately cultivate a deeper sense of appreciation for what that person has done for you.

The level of gratitude you have regarding an experience often impacts on the way you view an event. If you can cultivate gratitude for the learning you are taking from a difficult event then you will be able to perceive the event differently and more positively. This different perspective will enable you to make better decisions and be more creative and innovative when problem solving.

Gratitude though is not just about responding to those things that others do for you. One of the most powerful things you can do is to cultivate your own internal gratitude muscle and learn the habit of focusing on what is happening in your own life that you can be grateful for – people, things, experiences, learning, your environment, attributes, possibilities... the list is endless.

Here are some ideas on how to build your gratitude muscle:

- Start a gratitude journal and each day record at least three things that you are grateful for.
- Send a note to someone to say thank you for something they have done for you – you will be amazed at how good it makes you feel.
- Make a list of all the things others would be grateful to you for. Challenge yourself to come up with at least 20.
- Find at least 5 opportunities a day, for one week, to say thank you and really, really, really mean it.
- Write a gratitude letter to someone from your past who had a particular impact on you (e.g. a teacher, a past manager, a relative) and then (if possible) deliver it personally to them.
- Find a gratitude saying and place it somewhere where you will see it often.
- Forgive someone for a wrong they may have done to you and be grateful that you are able to do so.
- Know your gratitude score. Complete the Gratitude Questionnaire that is located on the Authentic Happiness web site at the following address:

<http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu> Note: You will first have to register as a user to get access to this questionnaire. This registration and all the questionnaires available on this site are free.