



# The Attitude of Gratitude...Your Path to Elevate Your Capabilities

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Are you looking for a path to elevate your physical, financial, relational, mental and emotional capabilities? How about gaining a higher level of control over your environment, personal growth, purpose in life, and self-acceptance? And living each day with more happiness and a lower level of stress? The answer may surprise you. It is the attitude of gratitude.

So, what is gratitude? Dan Sullivan, Founder and President of The Strategic Coach, offers the following definition: "Gratitude is an internally generated capability that allows an individual to create and discover unlimited meaning and value in every situation and relationship in life." Simply put, gratitude shifts your focus from what your life lacks to the abundance that is already present. In addition, behavioral and psychological research shows the surprising life improvements that stem from your attitude of gratitude. Giving thanks makes you more resilient, improves your health, reduces stress and strengthens relationships.

Author Angeles Arrien wrote, "Gratitude is a feeling that spontaneously emerges from within. However, it is not simply an emotional response; it is also a choice you make."

Arrien suggests four ways to express gratitude:

1. Recognize the good in your life
2. Accumulate and learn from the experiences of growth and change
3. Exhibit kindness, compassion, and forgiveness in work and your personal life
4. Safeguard your family, yourself, your business, your employees and your clients' businesses

### **Research Shows that Gratitude Heightens Quality of Life.**

The systematic study of gratitude within psychology did not begin until around the year 2000, possibly because psychology has traditionally been focused on understanding distress rather than positive emotions.

Two psychologists, Michael McCullough of Southern Methodist University in Dallas and Robert Emmons of the University of California at Davis conducted an experiment on gratitude and its impact on well-being. The study split hundreds of people into three differing groups and all participants were asked to keep diaries. Group A kept a diary of the events that occurred during the day without being told to write about either good or bad things; Group B was told to record their unpleasant experiences; and Group C was instructed to make a daily list of those things for which they were grateful.

The study evidenced that daily gratitude exercises result in higher recorded levels of alertness, enthusiasm, determination, optimism, and energy. In addition, those in the gratitude group experienced less depression and stress, were more likely to help others, exercised more regularly, and made greater progress toward achieving goals. In addition, research shows that those who live with an attitude of gratitude tend to be more creative, bounce back more quickly from adversity, have stronger immune systems, and have stronger relationships than those who don't practice gratitude. Dr. Emmons points out, "To say that you are grateful is not to say that everything in your life is necessarily great. It just means that you are aware of your blessings."

An attitude of gratitude also serves to reinforce future prosocial behaviors in benefactors. For example, one experiment found that customers of a jewelry store who were called and thanked showed a subsequent 70% increase in purchases. In comparison, customers who were called and thanked and told about a pending sale showed only a 30% increase in purchases, and customers who were not called at all did not show any increase. In another study, regular patrons of a restaurant gave bigger tips when servers wrote thank you on their checks.

### **The Gratitude Principle**

In the book, *The Gratitude Principle*, Dan Sullivan states, "We all love the grateful person, especially if he or she is talented and successful. The grateful individual is deeply appreciated and people go out of their way to assist their progress because there is something happy and special about them. Conversely, we quickly take a disliking to the person who shows no gratitude for the opportunities, advantages and support others have provided. We want to put obstacles in their way."

The Gratitude Principle is simple and basic. You can achieve endless progress and success in your life as long as you are increasingly grateful each step along the way. On the other hand, lack of gratitude (ungratefulness) is one of the biggest obstacles toward personal progress.

It is sad to say that you personally witness many people in today's society, both rich and poor, who feel sorry for themselves. They look around and see others getting ahead of them. When they self-reflect, it seems like they have nothing. And, as life moves forward, they find it more and more difficult to improve their situation. Why? They have no attitude of gratitude.

Unlike many human skills, The Gratitude Principle can be learned and mastered. The skill can be acquired at any age. It is never too late to fully train and develop gratitude. Sullivan surmises that the very structure of our brain is programmed to understand the value of gratitude. It is just that many people as children are taught by role models – parents, friends, teachers, and coaches – who are themselves ungrateful.

### **The Influence of Gratitude in the Business Setting**

The scientific perspective of gratitude substantiates that it has a positive impact on business performance. Tom Rath and Donald O. Clifton, Ph.D., authors of *How Full is Your Bucket?*, surveyed more than 4 million employees worldwide on this topic. Their analysis, which included more than 10,000 business units and more than 30 industries, found that individuals who received regular recognition and praise:

- Increased their individual productivity;
- Increased engagement among their colleagues;
- Were more likely to stay with their organization;
- Received higher loyalty and satisfaction scores from their customers; and
- Had better safety records and fewer accidents.

Organizational leaders who appreciate and practice the attitude of gratitude share positive emotions with work groups to enhance job satisfaction, engagement and performance. I suggest that you think of these business leaders as giant magnets. Whatever they are feeling, whether it be fear, anger, happiness, love, joy, gratitude, resistance, etc., are, in essence, creating and projecting a magnetic force that attracts and draws them to events, conditions, and circumstances which are in direct correlation to what their employees are feeling. In *How Full is Your Bucket?* Rath and Clifton convey the “theory of the dipper and the bucket.” You have an invisible bucket constantly being emptied or filled, depending on what others say or do to you. When your bucket is full, you feel great. When your bucket is empty, you feel small and unimportant. You also have an invisible dipper. When you use the dipper to fill other peoples’ buckets – to express gratitude to stimulate positive emotions – you also fill your own bucket. On the other hand, when you use that dipper to dip from another person’s bucket – by saying or doing things that decrease positive emotions – you diminish yourself and come off as ungrateful.

### **Mastering the Attitude of Gratitude**

Each day, you have the opportunity to shift your focus from what your life lacks to the abundance that is already present. While there are many ways to practice gratitude, the following three strategies should be considered:

The Mental Gratitude List: As you ready yourself each and every day for the challenges of life, mentally go over a list of things for which you are grateful. Consider finding a quiet place for which self-reflection and meditation are conducive. Visualizing people, places, and things for which you are grateful will get your day off to a great start.

The Gratitude Journal: This is a concept made famous by Sarah Breathnach in her book Simple Abundance Journal of Gratitude. Her exercise consists of writing down three to ten things every day for which you are grateful in a journal. Writing down things for which you are grateful reinforces your ability to self-reflect and your commitment to focus on the abundance of gifts that you already have.

The Gratitude Letter: Another exercise is to write a gratitude letter to a person who has exerted a positive influence in your life but whom you may not have properly thanked. Consider setting up a meeting and read the letter face to face.

Developing your attitude of gratitude is one of the most important and essential skills you can master for attracting and manifesting the things you desire in your life. The attitude of gratitude... your path to elevate your capabilities.

*Wikipedia contributors. "Gratitude." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 2 Oct. 2014.*

*ACF NewsSource, the Osgood File*

<http://www.thechangeblog.com/gratitude/>

### About the Author

Scott Addis, CPCU, CRA, CBWA is the CEO of Beyond Insurance and is recognized as an industry leader having been named a Philadelphia finalist for *Inc. Magazine's* "Entrepreneur of the Year" award as well as one of the "25 Most Innovative Agents in America." Beyond Insurance is a consulting firm that offers leadership training, cultural transformation, and talent and tactical development for enlightened professionals who are looking to take their practice to the next level. Since 2007, the proven and repeatable processes of Beyond Insurance have transformed individuals and organizations as measured by enhanced organic growth, productivity, profitability, and value in the marketplace.