

## **GRATITUDE**

Written by Kirsty O'Callaghan - see full attribution at the end of this document.

**“Gratitude is merely the secret hope of further favours.”  
Francois de La Rochefoucauld.**

Most of us have been told at one time or another to be grateful for what we have. Depending on the circumstances and who is doing the telling, this can be annoying or might even allow us to feel more “lack” in our lives. We usually get told this when we are expressing we want more of something, right from being a very young child. What I have found that we are not being ‘told’ is that there is an art and good reason to being grateful.

The saying goes: If you focus on what you don't have you will attract more of it. Whereas if you focus on what you do have, that already brings you joy, satisfaction and/or a sense of wellbeing, you will attract more of this. So how does this work and how is it relevant to all of us?

We are all here to grow, learn and grow some more, physically, mentally and emotionally. We start with a small house and as time goes by we move to a bigger house. We start with a small business and over time and with effort the business will grow. We start with a smaller position in a job and, again, overtime we move to a position with larger responsibilities. And the list can go on.

Where we find ourselves being stuck or overwhelmed or not satisfied – or nothing to be grateful for – is when we do not grow in the situation we find ourselves in.

More than likely, the reason we are not growing or finding satisfaction is, in my experience, that we are not feeling the feelings of gratitude for what we have and/or achieved and hence not allowing more things or situations into our lives to be grateful for. We sit in the place of allowing ‘not having enough, or not what we want’, and with this feeling and thought process create more of it, by being blinded to opportunity, not feeling good enough and our body language and actions follow this pattern.

A good example of this not too long ago in my own experience of life, I had left a physically and emotionally abusive relationship with my 2 children. I left with nothing except a car and a few bucks in a bank account. I left behind a house, 2 very profitable businesses and a mass of assets. It was safer to just get out this way. I was very bitter about this and the ramifications of having to (what I saw as) forcibly downsize. Over the next couple of years I got involved in another relationship, set up a business for him, put in financial assistance to start up business, then he ran it into the ground and left. Again, I was out of pocket.

I started to notice I never had enough, every conversation I had was about not having enough, and all the new friends I made also didn't have enough! The interesting thing was that it wasn't just money; it was time with my children, time for work and time for me. One day, in desperation more than anything else, I sat down and looked around me and thought; what good do I have in my life now? At this point, my daughter came running out to where I was, laughing and giggling, her strawberry blonde locks a mess and arms waving around. I realised I hadn't taken the time to be grateful for my healthy and happy children and really look at their smiling faces and eyes. Then I saw our comfortable home, our nice car, my great friends and my wonderful sister. I also saw I loved my work, helping others and I gained so much satisfaction from being healthy and free from others bad behaviour. I also noticed I had choices. My spirit and mood uplifted and I made a deal with myself to be grateful for 5 things everyday, no matter how big or small they were.

From that day my life changed. I no longer felt helpless and gullible. I no longer felt 'poor' and worthless. I had so much, that I just wasn't seeing. I also noticed, to my amazement, my client base increasing and more time for me. I started to feel like spending time playing with my children was just as important as work and chores. To top it off, not too long after that, I was introduced, through a friend, to a wonderful man who I married and is truly a blessing. Since this time I have never forgotten to be grateful, no matter what circumstances I am in and things just seem to fall into my lap, rather than fall in a heap!

I have found gratitude is like negative and positive thinking. You cannot cancel out negative thoughts, but by replacing them with more positive ones, slowly but surely the negative thoughts get quieter and quieter, until they are so low you cannot hear them. I am not saying to never ask for more, but have a healthy balance of seeing what wonderful things are in your life already and walking tall into situations that provide you with the new experiences and things you want too.

Today I am grateful for my fingers to type this, the computer I am typing on, and the eyes to read what I am typing. I am grateful I am in a position to share this with you.

### **The Research**

Research has been undertaken looking at the positive effects of gratitude. In one study, the researchers (McCollough and Emmons – Research Project on Gratitude and Thanksgiving) found some interesting findings.

The results of the study indicated that daily gratitude exercises resulted in higher reported levels of alertness, enthusiasm, determination, optimism and energy. Additionally, the gratitude group experienced less depression and stress, was more likely to help others, exercised more regularly and made more progress toward personal goals. According to the findings, people who feel grateful are also more likely to feel loved. McCollough and Emmons also noted that gratitude encouraged a positive cycle of reciprocal kindness among people since one act of gratitude encourages another.

### **Coaching Exercises – What can I do to be more grateful?**

It doesn't matter what situation you are in, a job you hate, a health issue, an undesirable home situation or anything you feel you have no control over, I have found there are some simple things you can do to change your mindset and your energy.

As yourself the following questions, and in a journal or some other format appropriate to you, write down your answers, insights, beliefs etc.

- What was a situation in the last week that I found uplifting, brought a smile to my face or I felt I achieved something? Describe the situation in as much detail as possible especially regarding the positive feelings themselves versus just the “things” that occurred.
- What is working for me in my life now? Create as long a list as possible and keep the language entirely positive.
- What strengths do I know I have that have enabled me to overcome obstacles or something I was afraid of in the past? Making a list of these strengths can help you identify things you're grateful for...namely, being grateful you have these strengths and also the positive effects these strengths create.
- Who is in my life now that I love being around and/or is fun and comfortable to be around? Even if someone isn't always fun,

consider that there are times of fun, joy, inspiration, support, learning...or anything else positive, that you may gain from that person from time to time.

- When did I last feel lucky and why? This question isn't about "luck" itself, but about when you felt so grateful for the good fortune of whatever the event, person or thing was. Imagine that situation again and write down how you felt and what made that moment so special.
- What can I do to make a less than desirable situation better, something small? Granted, may seem like it's relative to a particular situation, but if you expand your thinking to imagine a strategy you could use in ANY less than desirable situation to make it better. For example, could you take a moment to think about the situation and challenge yourself to see what parts of it are good, and therefore something you could be grateful for?
- What do I love about my life (now or in the past)? Create as long a list as possible. And when you feel you've exhausted yourself, come up with a few more. And after that, you may even want to ask someone close to you to see what they believe you love about your life, as this new perspective may just add to your list.
- When was the last time I 'let my hair down' and had fun? The challenge here is to not get caught up in the negative side of how long it may have been, or why you may not have let yourself have fun, or any other negative. The focus is about when you DID have fun, and what you choose to do in that moment that allowed the fun to happen. Can you make similar choices now and in the future, and more regularly?

You can start now, with little actions that could set off a chain of events that open your world to the most awesome opportunities. Just take a breath, think grateful thoughts, hold your head high and feel the feeling of deserving more good things coming to you right now.

I have found the most effective grateful exercise for me is when I go to bed, before I sleep, I am thankful for all my experiences during the day, good and bad because I learnt something, and find 5 specific things I am grateful for – and sometimes one of them is just the pillow I put my head on!



**Author Profile:** Kirsty O'Callaghan is the Proprietor of Unity-Qld. Kirsty specialises in assisting and guiding working parents to create a stronger connection with their children and satisfaction in their parenting role. The techniques and strategies Kirsty uses focus on a

holistic and individual basis; knowing we are all capable of greatness, with the right knowledge, tools and support.

**Website:** [www.unity-qld.com.au](http://www.unity-qld.com.au).

**Phone:** +61 7 3482 4295

**Business:** Unity-Qld

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