

The Spirit
of Intervenor:
The Quest Continues

Dear Resident, Thank You For...

A lesson in gratitude followed by a moment to reflect on why you are grateful, and to whom.



Why Gratitude?

- What does gratitude have to do with being an Intervenor?
 - Social workers, when compared to normative populations, experience higher levels of stress and trait depression than other professions (Bennet et al., 1993).
 - Clinically depressed individuals showed significantly lower gratitude (nearly 50% less) than nondepressed controls (Emmons, 38).
 - Gratitude and depression had the strongest inverse associations (Watkins et al., 2003)

Why Gratitude?

- Social support is an important stress buffer, and has been shown to play a significant role in mediating depression (Bennet et al., 1993).
 - These findings underlie the fact that we are interpersonal beings. *We need, rely, and depend* on the people in our lives in order to be healthy and happy.



Need, Rely, and Depend?

- In our culture and profession these are often considered ‘dirty’ words.
 - Test: Think of someone you might describe as “needy”
 - “Gratitude implies humility--a recognition that we could not be who we are or where we are in life without the contributions of others” (Emmons, 5).
- Depressed individuals tend to engage in self-focus which makes them more gloomy.
 - By practicing gratitude, one can re-focus their attention on what others are providing for us (Emmons, 41).

Gratitude Increases Happiness

- Research has shown that individuals who practice grateful thinking on a regular basis:
 - Exercise more regularly
 - Report fewer illness symptoms
 - Feel better about their lives overall
 - Are more optimistic about the future
 - Cope more effectively with everyday stress
 - Feel more loving, forgiving, joyful and enthusiastic!

Prove It!

- A Study by Emmons & McCullough (2003).
- Method
 - Randomly assigned P's to one of three tasks:
 - (1) The Gratitude Condition
 - P's listed five things that they were grateful for that occurred in the past week
 - (2) The Hassles Condition
 - P's listed five hassles from the past week
 - (3) The Events Condition (neutral)
 - P's listed five circumstances that affected them in the past week (not exceptionally pos or neg).
- A short journal was kept once a week for 10 weeks.

The Results Are In!

- The study found:
 - P's in the gratitude condition were overall more satisfied with their lives and more optimistic than either of other conditions.
 - Gratitude condition P's exercised more, were rated as happier and more joyful by close friends and partners, and were less ill.
 - A similar study revealed that P's in a "gratitude condition" reported getting more hours of sleep, and feel asleep quicker than the control condition (Emmons, 27).
 - Sleep is IMMENSELY important to our overall health and well-being.

How to Become More Grateful

- Henri Nouwen, priest, psychologist, and devotional writer.
 - “Gratitude as a discipline involves conscious choice. I can choose to be grateful even when my emotions and feelings are steep and hurt and resentful. It is amazing how many occasions present themselves in which I can choose to be grateful when I am criticized, even when my heart responds in bitterness” (Emmons, 17).
- Gratitude is as simple as recognizing the beauty of the simple and ordinary:
 - “I like the Cyclostyle ink, it is so inky. I do not think there is anyone who takes such fierce pleasure in things being themselves as I do. The startling wetness of water excites and intoxicates me: the fieriness of fire, the steeliness of steel, the unutterable muddiness of mud” (Emmons, 20).

Emmons' 10 Steps

- Keep a gratitude journal
- Remember the bad
- Ask yourself three questions
- Learn prayers of gratitude
- Come to your senses
- Use visual reminders
- Make a vow to practice gratitude
- Watch your language
- Go through the motions
- Think outside the box

A Gratitude Visit

- Write approximately 300 words to a person whom you are grateful.
 - be specific, write concrete events, use specific details of the event(s)
 - make sure it is well-written, take your time, do not rush your thoughts
 - explain how they made a difference, and how you are a changed person because of them
- Tell the person “I want to come and visit you” but don’t tell them why.
- Read your card.

Your Time to Reflect & Write

- “In ordinary life we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give, and that it is only with gratitude that life becomes rich”
•-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, theologian.
- “We cannot be grateful without being thoughtful. We cannot shift our mental gears into neutral and maintain a grateful lifestyle. This is why gratitude requires contemplation and reflection”.
-Robert Emmons, Ph.D
- “To be alive is to be in relationships with others, relationships that are vital to our well-being. The self, by itself, is a very poor place to find happiness or meaning in life. Gratitude takes us outside ourselves where we see ourselves as part of a larger, intricate network of sustaining relationships that are mutually reciprocal”. -Robert Emmons, Ph.D

Discussion & Sharing

Thank You!

References

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