

# An Attitude of Gratitude Matters Year-Round

(Not Just during the Holiday Season)

By Kelli Richards



## Many Proven Benefits of Gratitude

We live in a fast-paced world where we're juggling multiple responsibilities, challenges and distractions, and we're spinning plates faster than ever before. It's exhausting! Often we're so focused on what's wrong and attempting to solve problems in our daily round, that few of us take the time to slow down and acknowledge what's working and what's right with our lives. And that's a huge and costly mistake that impacts everything.

When we're mindful, and we take the time to consciously acknowledge things that really matter on a daily basis in our lives and in our work, studies have shown that we're happier and that giving thanks also has a lasting effect on our mood. That mindset allows us to get through our days easier with a more peaceful mind and a lighter heart that can offset the stresses, tensions and anxieties that may otherwise pile on.

When we actively practice being grateful and thankful, our relationships improve, our stress levels drop, our health is enhanced – and we see the world differently; we're more open-minded and we can see a broader suite of options and possibilities than we otherwise might. We make better decisions, we appreciate the contributions of others, we recognize and enjoy life's simple pleasures, and we generally have a greater sense of ease and flow (abundance) in our lives. We tend to draw more good towards us.

## Different Forms of Gratitude

There are many different ways we can express gratitude towards ourselves and others. When we look in the mirror we can choose to honor and love what we see instead of poking at imperfections and beating ourselves up. We can acknowledge ourselves when we complete a task, achieve a goal we set for ourselves, or when something we said or did results in a ripple effect of paying it forward to those around us. We can make a daily list of what's gone right and what we're thankful for in a gratitude journal.

We can honor others by paying attention to them, listening to them, validating them, paying them a sincere compliment – we all want to feel seen, heard and acknowledged. When you express your gratitude for something wonderful they have done and/or how it's impacted you, you light them up and strengthen the bond between you; it costs nothing.

Many of us are so fortunate. We have more than most, and it's a form of gratitude to give our time and money to people and causes that matter to us – whenever and however it makes the most sense in our situation.

Quite simply, saying thank you to our veterans and first responders, and others who put their lives on the line to make our world safer is one example of how easy it is to practice gratitude often and mindfully.

## How Practicing Gratitude Year-Round Can Be a Game-Changer

Based on what I've shared to this point, it bears repeating that there is no reason to limit focusing on gratitude seasonally during the Holidays. And in fact the rationale for practicing it on a regular basis is overwhelming towards increased well-being, enhanced optimism & long-lasting positivity.

When we acknowledge others who work with us, for example, and demonstrate how thankful we are

for their efforts and contributions on a regular basis, that results in a happier, healthier working environment and increases retention. Mindful business leaders who are wise and generous enough to do so, are rewarded with more productive individuals & teams.

Many people, myself included, have a regular practice of keeping a gratitude journal – writing down 5-10 things we're thankful for on a daily basis whether first thing in the morning or before we turn in at bedtime. This allows us to stay focused on all the good things happening in our lives and strengthens our gratitude muscle which makes us happier & healthier.

As you're reflecting on these things, some powerful questions may be in order to help you focus on what's most meaningful. For example:

\*When you consider your overall life situation now, what are the things you're most grateful for?

\*What has happened recently in your world that has really been meaningful for you -- and that has enhanced your well-being?

\*What are you most thankful for about your partner/boss/friends/et al; be specific as you write those things down (and consider expressing them directly to deepen your relationships with those individuals)?

As author M.J. Ryan writes in her classic book *Attitudes of Gratitude: How to Give and Receive Joy Every Day of Your Life*, "...Gratitude elicits only positive feelings – love, compassion, joy and hope. As we focus on what we are thankful for on a regular basis, fear, anger, depression and bitterness simply melt away, seemingly without effort."

With so many benefits to be had, consider playing with being more mindful in creating a regular gratitude practice. There are no rules, don't stress, have fun with it, and keep it simple. Create a customized approach that works for you, and notice over time how things shift for you as a result.

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