



Your Thankfulness Quotient

No personal quality can deliver more meaning and joy than gratefulness - a deep recognition and appreciation for the wonders and blessings that life offers up. However, a rich sense of thankfulness is not automatically inherent in our nature. It is a trait that must be developed – and the more keenly we develop it, the happier and more balanced we become. *(Reading time 180 seconds).*

Thankfulness is the quality or state of being grateful. It is a positive character trait like courage, honesty or ambition. It is absolutely necessary to your enjoyment of life. Without it, you cannot be happy and balanced. With it, life is good, much more meaningful and rewarding.

However, it takes effort to develop, because our more natural tendency is to bemoan what we don't have and why we don't have it. The more we give in to a routine of such lamenting the more we become whiners. A whining lack of appreciation is truly bad for us and those around us.

All of us have the capacity to improve ourselves and our lives by instilling a more routine sense of gratitude into our being; by making it even more of who we are. That begins with an awareness and focus on the huge immediate benefits of developing our "thankfulness" trait.

Doing so can turn a fast food lunch into a feast, a sunny day into a vacation, a stranger into a friend and a house into a home. It molds bitterness into joy and what we have into more than enough.

Last week "Slick" Surratt a former outfielder for the Kansas City Monarchs of the old Negro Baseball Leagues died after struggling in his later years with Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. Fay Vincent, the former commissioner of Major League Baseball, wrote a heartfelt tribute to Slick, his dear friend. In it he explained, that Slick "...had helped clear the airfield at Guadalcanal during World War II as an Army Bulldozer operator. He came home from war hoping to play baseball again. But he was the wrong color, and so he spent some 50 years on the line as welder at the Ford Motor Co. plant in Kansas City."

Slick was one of the men of the Negro Leagues that kept baseball alive in the black community and taught the next generation, making possible the careers of such superstars as Hank Aaron, Willie Mayes, Bob Gibson and so many more. Slick was in good physical shape even many years after his playing was over, "But it was his smile you had to notice. He was always smiling, full of joy," Fay notes. He had fun and was fun to be with.

What Mr. Vincent recalled the most about this friend he truly loved was his total lack of bitterness. The hardships of being raised in the severe segregation of his native Arkansas were dismissed, as was being denied any chance even to try out for a big league team.

"I see no point in being bitter. It won't do no good for no one," Slick told the commissioner. Faye recounts even when he was dealing with his illnesses, Slick always sounded upbeat.

Commissioner Vincent reflects, "I will not forget the lessons I learned from this good and noble man. I will miss him, but I will never forget the joy of being in his company."

Slick Surratt reflected the inner joy that comes from a deep gratitude for the positive opportunities life had offered up to him, not a bemoaning of the negative roadblocks that may have made another man bitter. Slick made the choice to be grateful.

So too, for each of us being thankful is a choice that we can develop into a habit or way of being. Choosing thankfulness every day develops it into one of your positive personal character traits. That nobility within you then reflects itself both inwardly and outwardly as the joy and warm friendly feelings of gratitude.

So what is your more dominant state? Do you tend to fret more about what you don't have...on how someone else has more... or has slighted you...or let you down...or made your day more difficult? Or are you thankful to have a store to shop in. Some money to shop with. A roof over your head tonight. Warmth from the cold. A TV filled with entertainment and education. And oh, if you have someone in your life, family – friend to love or who loves you – are you grateful? Every day?

Whatever your answer, consciously focusing on upgrading your thankfulness character trait will improve your life. Recent psychological research for example, shows that participants who wrote down things they were grateful for at the end of the week were 25% happier, more satisfied with their lives overall, more optimistic about the upcoming week, exercising more and sleeping better.

Here are two simple and effective ways to reap the benefits of developing your thankfulness quotient.

Write Yourself Visual Reminders

The primary reason we are not more routinely thankful is we simply forget to be mindful of it. It is not fully engrained yet as a habit. So create these visual commitments and prompts:

- Schedule an appointment with yourself in your calendar to “be thankful.” At lunch and the end of the day are good times. Dwell mentally or just jot down the occurrences, people, pleasures or achievements of the day you are grateful for. Schedule these reminders for 30 days.
- Post a note on your door at home, or in your car or office as a reminder.

Express Your Gratefulness Verbally

Maximize the impact of your gratitude, not by just thinking it and feeling it but also by expressing it.

Last week I had lunch at a favorite spot of mine that has been a long time star of the Atlanta restaurant scene. As I sat down a bustling waiter I knew passed and I asked how he’d been doing. He paused, smiled and replied, “Great! I’m alive, and I’m working and I’m grateful.” And he truly was, and happily expressing it. His doing so not only was reinforcing for him but made me even more thankful and joyful to be back dining with him.

So express your thankfulness to and for others often. Creating this habit multiplies the positive impact for you as well as all those around you.

Jim Bird, Publisher

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Quotes by Albert Schweitzer

“At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person.”

Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.”

“To educate yourself for the feeling of gratitude means to take nothing for granted... Train yourself never to put off the word or action for the expression of gratitude.”

Albert Schweitzer (1875 – 1965) was a philosopher, theologian, musician and physician.

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Regularly tell the people who bring joy and meaning to your life that they do just that. Realize the good they direct towards you is intentional; it does not happen by chance. In your own way let them know you are thankful for them...today, and often.

Work-Life Balance Lessons

By Jack Dawson

Project team success cannot be achieved without a work life-balance effort. It is important to have your own definition of work-life balance. My family comes first, but part of putting my family first means providing for them – so my project performance is critical. This means there are times when the job must come first.

However, there are times when my personal commitments take priority. I am a scout leader to our local troop, and take that commitment very seriously. And, when the math problems are too difficult at homework time, I must be there to help. I am fortunate to have a qualified and dedicated team around me on both my work team and my home team (thanks in large part to my wife). They help me achieve my work-life balance goals.

Here are a few thoughts that help me with achieving my work life balance efforts.

Learn how to commute. I have learned from experience that if I leave my current job site by 4:50 p.m., I can beat the traffic rush. If I wait just 15 more minutes, I will be stuck in traffic and it will take much longer to get home.

Don’t let technology trap you. I do not have a Blackberry; it isn’t a good fit for me. My team knows to call my cell or home phone if there is an after-hours issue. I encourage colleagues attending a son or daughter’s game to stay off e-mail and enjoy the game.

Be strategic about how you manage your time. I do a walk-through of the job site after the crews have left for the day for two reasons. First, I can review a large amount of square footage in a short period. Second, reviewing the status of the job at the end of the day helps me use my commute home to organize my priorities for the next few days.

Listen so you can help others. My team used to meet once a week but after members requested more frequent meetings, we began gathering every morning. It improves communication and helps clarify priorities, which relieves stress and contributes toward better balance for everyone in the group.

Share the load. It’s hard to avoid working overtime or some weekends in this business; we share that responsibility so that the burden doesn’t always fall on the same person. All it takes is a rotating schedule for weekend coverage and for locking up the site at the end of the day.

There’s no formula. Work-life balance is like cooking – I never make spaghetti sauce the same way twice, but it always tastes good. Your balance needs will change over time, so be flexible.

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