



Solutions for Life

from **Solutions Counseling & EAP**
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An Attitude of Gratitude

What if we woke up tomorrow and had only the things for which we were grateful today?

I saw the quote above on social media recently. It immediately made me start thinking - am I grateful for all that I have right now? Do I appreciate my life enough?

This time of year, I feel like everyone is gearing up for the marathon of the holidays. It's about to get crazy for many of you - shopping, wrapping, baking, partying. I'm exhausted just thinking about it! I wonder if, before the insanity ensues, you would be willing to pause and spend some time with me thinking about being more grateful? It is the Thanksgiving season, after all.

The definition of gratitude is being thankful and ready to show appreciation. I talk a lot with clients about bringing this into their relationships. Therapy is all about change, and change is hard. When someone puts forth effort and makes changes, it is really important that the change is noticed and appreciated. Otherwise, it goes away.

The same thing happens to all of us. When we don't appreciate what we have, who we have in our lives, and the talents we've been given, those things will go away. I tell people all the time whatever you pay attention to, is what you get more of.

So, how do you work out your gratitude muscle? Here are some suggestions.

Start a gratitude journal. Go buy yourself a journal specifically for the purpose of recording the good things you notice daily. Every evening, write five things for which you are grateful, big or small. Did you see a rainbow/butterfly/favorite bird today? Did you get to talk to a good friend? Were you productive at work? Did you eat the best-tasting piece of fruit? Did you make it through your day without major traffic? As you can see, even the smallest things count and can be recorded in your journal. The whole point is to train yourself to look for the good things that already exist in your life.

Live in the moment. I've written about mindfulness before. Your ability to truly be present in whatever you are doing increases your ability to absorb and appreciate that activity. No more mindless meals where you wolf down your food - savor each bite. No more looking at your phone while you tell yourself you are playing with your children - they get your full attention and you get to appreciate the miracles they are. Even things you don't particularly like to do deserve your full attention. That way, you'll do a good job and at least you get to feel positive about that!

Stop comparing yourself with others. There will always be people who have more than you, and always people who have less. When you are grateful for what you have, you don't worry as much about what you don't have and what others have that you would like. Hey, I don't drive the nicest car on the planet. But there are cars a whole lot worse than mine. And there are a whole lot of people who don't even have cars. Or houses. Or electricity. We could be so much worse off, my friends.

Watch your mouth. What are your conversations like? Are you critical of others? Are you critical of yourself? Does the tape that is playing in your mind all the time (that's right, we all have the tape - you are not alone) contain affirming, positive thoughts? Or are you telling yourself negative things that do nothing but make you feel bad, and lessen the likelihood of you being happy and successful? Be careful what your conversations consist of. Words affect mood. Mood affects attitude. Attitude sets the tone for your life.

This time around on the holiday merry-go-round, I hope you will add some time for gratitude to your day. Even the holiday merry-go-round is something to be grateful for. I am grateful for all of you - the people who take the time to read my articles, and the people who tell me they enjoy them. I appreciate you!