

Living with an Attitude of Gratitude

Creating an attitude of gratitude is one of the easiest steps we can take to improve our lives. The happiness that we create for ourselves by showing our appreciation has far-reaching effects, both for ourselves and for those we come into contact with. The potential for gratitude to spread beyond those people also increases significantly – it can be highly contagious. There are so many different ways that we can express an attitude of gratitude. Here are just a few:

Say “thank you”. This is the most basic and well-known way to show appreciation to others. Saying “thank you” is a great way to express your gratitude and can be done in several different forms. You can say it in person, over the phone, in a note, or in an email. Using this when it’s least expected can have significant results in lifting someone’s spirits. For example, a quick note to your child’s teacher thanking her for her hard work and patience might give her the boost of energy that she needs right when she needs it most. You may never know what effect this has had on her, but it will have an effect.

Stop complaining about your life. Even as tough as life can be sometimes, remember that there is always someone that has things worse than you do. Constant complaining about what is wrong in your life will keep you focused on that. The opposite is true as well – focusing on what is right in your life will keep you focused on that. Focusing on the negative will bring you down while focusing on the positive will lift you up.

Focus on what you have, not what you don’t have. This is very closely related to not complaining about your life. Being grateful for what you do have keeps you in a positive place, whereas focusing on what you don’t have keeps you in a negative place. Focusing on what you do have, regardless of how little or how much that may be, is a great expression of gratitude.

Model your attitude. Modeling your attitude of gratitude is a great way to spread it to others. We’ve all heard the Golden Rule to “treat others the way you want to be treated”. Showing your appreciation to others shows them that you like to be treated this way too. An attitude of gratitude can be quite infectious!

Be satisfied with simple things and be mindful of little things. Being grateful for the little things in our lives is just as important (if not, more so) than being grateful for the big things. Our lives are filled with little things every day that we can be grateful for. What about that front row parking spot you found when you were running late? Or the beautiful weather outside? How about the store clerk that went out of her way to help you? This may take a little practice, but there are many little things throughout the day that we can be grateful for if we take the time to notice them.

Give to someone else. This is the best way to spread your gratitude of attitude. There are so many different ways to give to someone else. You could volunteer your time to help those less fortunate or give you time to children by mentoring them. The possibilities are endless but could make a huge difference in someone’s life without you even knowing it. If they in turn give to someone else, the cycle could continue without end.

Keep a gratitude journal. Let’s just be honest here: there are some days when it is hard to find anything to be grateful for. Keeping a gratitude journal can help with that. There are preprinted journals so you can just fill in the blanks or you can make your own. The important thing is to find at least 5 things each day to be grateful for, no matter how big or small those things are. A gratitude journal can serve two purposes: it will help you stop and remember what you are grateful for or it can serve as inspiration on days when you find it difficult to find anything to be grateful for by reading over past days.

Practice random acts of kindness. This can be one of the most fun and rewarding ways to live a life of gratitude, especially when it’s done anonymously. Surprise someone with something unexpected. You may never know what it meant to them but it will likely make their day. Try putting a note in your child’s lunch or bringing treats to the office to share. Even a small gesture can mean so much to someone.

Living a life of gratitude is one of the easiest ways to live a happier life. It takes very little effort to show someone you appreciate them but will mean so much to them. There are so many ways to make gratitude a part of our life and to spread that attitude to others. Make today the day you start living a life of gratitude and spread your light to the rest of the world!

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