WellSpring
Counseling and Health, LLC

"Becoming Thankful"

Maintaining an attitude of gratitude can be challenging and often requires a continual refocusing of our perspective. However, challenging this may be, studies show that it is indeed rewarding and benefits our physical, emotional, spiritual and social selves. Often a dramatic situation will cause us to wake up and acknowledge being thankful---a near miss accident, a neighbor losing their home, friends divorcing, hearing about a serious illness. The traumas that others experience often stir up our own emotional reactions enough so that we break out of our autopilot mode, which consists of moving rapidly through this life without any real consciousness or connection, to others or ourselves. When we are awakened by pain, we then become conscious…but why do we need pain to make us feel thankful and blessed? The pain of a crisis forces us to pay attention.

When we move towards open awareness and become flooded by gratitude, we can begin to see the simple blessings and joys of life. It is as if our hard, outer shell has been removed and our sensations are heightened. We become more open, more affectionate, and show appreciation. Some people feel uncomfortable and vulnerable in this state and quickly want to revert to the closed controlled existence. However, the challenge lies in maintaining this open state, which is essential for fostering connection with self and others.

Being thankful keeps us connected to God and to an optimistic expectation for the future. If we can take time to acknowledge the small things, the rest of life seems to come into perspective. Acknowledging the statement "we find evidence to support our beliefs" we can feel more grateful by asking the following:

- What did I see today that was beautiful?
- What acts of nobility did I notice?
- Where did I see kindness?
- Who are my blessings?
- When did I feel joyful today?

It is important to replay the positive moments in our day and to share them with others. Letting people know what you appreciate in them and resisting the tendency to take them for granted really blesses both the giver and the receiver. Don't wait for pain or a crisis to awaken you-we can receive this lesson in a much easier manner. Be open, be aware, see your blessings, express gratitude…and joy will abound.

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