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Attitude of Gratitude

If there is a secret to happiness, Gratitude is the key, the magic bullet, the answer.

Chris Peterson's research with character strengths (which I talk about in the special report "Tools for Harvesting Happiness" that you received when you signed up for this newsletter) indicates that GRATITUDE IS THE ONE STRENGTH MOST HIGHLY CORRELATED WITH HAPPINESS AND LIFE SATISFACTION.

Sonja Lubomyrski, at Univeristy of California, Riverside, assigned participants in a research project to pick one day a week and think of at least 5 things that happened in the past week that they were grateful or thankful for. After doing this for 6 weeks, these people were 30% happier than those in a control group who did nothing different during that time. The gratitude group also showed a 40% increase in their attitude of gratitude compared to the folks who just lived life as usual.

Julio Olalla, president of the Newfield Network and expert on adult learning, explains that gratitude is a place of expansive learning. While a lot of learning comes from a place of fear, that type of learning leads to two choices: retreat or attack. Think of our ancestors who learned to run from the saber tooth tiger, or attack the wild boar. In a life or death situation, fear is an appropriate response. Yet most of the situations we face today, including those that upset us or cause us stress, are not ones of life or death. Gratitude is a place of learning that offers broader opportunities of experience and response. FROM A PLACE OF GRATITUDE YOU HAVE MORE THAN TWO CHOICES.

Melodie Beattie, author of Codependent No More, says "Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity.... It turns problems into gifts, failures into success, the unexpected into perfect timing, and mistakes into important events. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow"

Need your own proof? Next time you're faced with a situation that upsets you, notice how you feel, what's happening to your body. Then ask yourself, "What is one small thing in this situation that I can be grateful for?" Focus on that one small thing and your gratitude towards it. Then

notice how you feel and what's happening to your body. Notice the ideas that start to come to you about how to deal with the situation.

This shift in perspective doesn't necessarily change the situation or immediately solve the problem, but from a point of Gratitude, the choices you make will be less reactive and more likely to actually ADD TO YOUR HAPPINESS rather than just reduce your stress.

Gratitude is emotion of choice; you can choose to be grateful and open the door to possibilities you wouldn't have seen before.
That's something to be grateful for!

P.S. During this season of Thanksgiving, give Sonja's experiment a try yourself. Between now and the end of the year, pick one day a week to be your Gratitude Day. Each week on that day, think over the past week and make note of at least 5 things that happened which you are grateful or thankful for. Notice your mood and level of gratitude – is it the holiday season or the attitude of gratitude? Maybe you'll decide to continue the experiment into the new year to find out!

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