

Amanda Kemmer
10/9/14

How many times in your life have you heard someone say, “You should be grateful for what you have, things could be worse”? Or, “It’s Thanksgiving, this is the time of the year where we give thanks.”

Why do we do this? Why do we associate being ‘thankful’ or ‘grateful’ with these certain situations? Specifically, why do we put such emphasis on gratitude in the face of misfortune? In the past, I have been guilty of this, [too](#).

Growing up, I was very stubborn. In fact, most people would probably still consider me to be this way. I like to think that I am a great listener; especially to those I am so thankful to have around me. But reflecting back on when I had a near-death experience in fifth grade, it’s clear that this hasn’t always been the case. My best friend and I had just gotten electric scooters and were determined to hit the open road. In being in fifth grade, I definitely had the mindset of being “too cool for safety.” After all, who wants to be seen in a helmet?

If it wasn’t for my Dad, that mindset could have made a lasting impact on my life.

That day, I got into an accident and hit my head on the end of a driveway. My helmet cracked down the center as a result of the impact, my body was bloody, and my best friend was extremely bruised.

Upon viewing this event now, I am extremely grateful for my Dad’s advice. I am grateful for my friendship with my friend with whom I got in the accident with. And most importantly, I am thankful for my good health.

As I said before, I *have* been guilty of not being a grateful spirit. The accident is a clear example of this. But it is through my experiences that I believe this is something one should do on a regular basis, not just when it comes to mind. As humans, we need to be more reflective, more appreciative of what is going on around us.

“Researchers are finding that the benefits of positive thinking are far-reaching, not only enhancing mental and physical health and disease immunity, but also making it easier to weather life’s storms and build relationships” (Jurgelski, [Susan](#)).

Optimism is closely associated with being grateful since both of these help people keep things in perspective. These optimistic tendencies often rub off on those close to you, making this positive way of thinking not only beneficial to your health, but also those you care about. This is all a part of building healthy relationships.

Grateful thinking doesn’t have to solely focus on the good in life, either. It is important to also look at regrets. Overcoming these negative thoughts helps us to view these situations in a better light.

Amanda Kemmer 10/9/2014 12:31 AM

Comment [1]: I started my article off with a lot of questions. Do you think that this was a good choice stylistically for the mode in which I am repurposing? I thought that it added to my article by grabbing the reader’s attention from the start.

Amanda Kemmer 10/9/2014 12:32 AM

Comment [2]: For all of my quotations, I indented them as done by The New Yorker. However, I’m worried that by indenting them they may seem too detached from the rest of the material. Do you think this is the case?

I have written letters to people “for whom I may have caused trouble for”, just to get my words out. I did not send them. But, it was through this exercise that I was able to reflect on the good times we had and **move on**. Quite surprisingly, forgiveness is a huge part of being a grateful spirit. One cannot hold a grudge and be appreciative.

“When we blame others for our misery, thus giving up responsibility, we give away our power and self-control. Forgiveness lets go of the damaging blame” (pg. 339, Chapter 15).

Forgiveness is **not** a way of excusing bad behavior; it is simply a way of coming to terms with life.

Gratitude is also a way of bringing people together, and this sense of oneness is reflected by the altruistic mentality that generally dominates those who are appreciative individuals.

A perfect example of this is John D. Rockefeller. He is well known as being the world’s first billionaire. What many don’t know is that he suffered from insomnia. In fact, he suffered so heavily from this that he was told at one point he would most likely only live a year more.

So, what did he do?

He changed his mindset and became more grateful. He thought of others by using his wealth for their benefit. As a result, he became healthier, mentally and physically.

“He kept on giving and caring for others, in fact, until he died at the age of ninety eight” (pg.357, Chapter 16).

Now, I’m not saying that gratitude is your one-way ticket to eternal youth and longevity. But, the health benefits of it definitely help. Being grateful, optimistic, altruistic, and forgiving (all words I closely associate), help you to live a healthier and more fulfilling life.

I feel that it is important to start these grateful habits at a younger age because they are just that: *habits*. And with more practice, these habits will become second nature as you age, helping you to have a better outlook on life.

So, grab some paper and a pencil and write down ten things you are grateful for today. Try doing a random act of kindness. Or simply push yourself outside of your comfort zone and tell someone why you appreciate his or her friendship.

But, most importantly, don’t think of gratitude as a “once a year thing.” Make it an important part of your life, and I assure you that you won’t be disappointed.

Amanda Kemmer 10/9/2014 12:33 AM

Comment [3]: Here I brought up altruism, which is a very important part of gratitude. Would it be helpful to put it under its own separate heading? I could do the same with forgiveness, too. Splitting the text up in that way may help with readability.

Works Cited

<http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/docview/807649001?pq-origsite=summon>

Jurgelski, S. (2010, Nov 21). Gratitude. *Sunday News* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/docview/807649001?accountid=14667>

The Healing Power of Spirituality, Faith, and Religion (Chapter 15).

The Healing Power of Altruism (Chapter 16).

One important question I would like feedback on:

My main concern with my article is the length. Generally, *The New Yorker* does not have articles that are this long online. But with my research, I felt that this length was needed. What are your thoughts on this? Do you feel that I need to shorten it at all?

Amanda Kemmer 10/9/2014 12:35 AM

Comment [4]: I looked over the article regarding annotations and was a little confused as to how I should incorporate these in my piece. Also, I had difficulty finding authors for the two chapters I referenced since they are from online sources I read for another class. Suggestions regarding citing would be very helpful! I hope we can have some class time to go over this.