



Letter from the Office of Employee & Organization Development

Praise for Gratitude

With the Thanksgiving holiday approaching, we anticipate gathering with family and friends to celebrate time honored traditions. From watching parades, enjoying good food, breaking the wishbone, or cheering the football game, many of us observe a moment of pause to express gratitude for the goodness in our lives. This is a nice tradition promoting goodwill and connecting us to something larger than ourselves whether it's other people, nature, or a higher spiritual power. Perhaps, it's one tradition worthy of practicing every day – pausing to acknowledge and express gratitude.

Dr. Robert A. Emmons, University of California, a psychologist researching individuals practicing gratitude found they experience physical, psychological, and social benefits. Gratefulness motivates us to exercise more and take better care of ourselves which strengthens our immune systems, lessens aches and pains, lowers blood pressure, and enhances a more restful sleep. As our bodies feel more alive, alert, and awake, we experience higher levels of joy, pleasure, optimism, and happiness. These positive emotions increase our ability to forgive, willingness to be generous, and promote compassion enriching our relationships with others. While we all feel and express gratitude differently applying it to past, present, or future experiences, it's a quality we can successfully develop and improve.

Here are some suggestions for developing gratitude:

- **Balanced Perspective** – choose how to view situations. Challenge yourself to focus on the positive by searching for the hidden opportunity in difficult situations.
- **Share the Positive** – help others realize the benefits of gratitude. Demonstrate daily your compassion or support of someone else through small acts of kindness.
- **Savor the Moment** – celebrate the present. Participate in your own life by noticing the positive often and enjoying the pleasures derived from them longer.
- **Keep a Journal** – write down positive experiences. At the end of the day, record 3-5 gifts of gratitude you received. Be specific and think about the sensations you felt at the time.
- **Write a Letter** – express appreciation to someone for their impact on your life. Once a month, write a thank you letter, send it, or read it to the person to share heartfelt moments and enrich your relationship. Even write one occasionally to yourself.
- **Express Yourself** – prayer, meditation, or practice mindfulness. During the day, take a few minutes to focus spiritually, embrace gratitude, or reflect on the meaning of events or actions. Mentally express thanks while focusing on the good intentions.

Gratitude helps us feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve our health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships. Expressing gratitude may be one of the easiest ways of feeling better. We affirm there is goodness in the world to receive and benefit from while realizing the source comes from outside ourselves. Acknowledging other people give us gifts helps us achieve happiness in our lives and encourages us to reciprocate in kind. Take a moment to pause, reflect on these moments, appreciate them, and express gratitude.

Wishing you a Happy Thanksgiving!

The OEOD Staff

