



## Living a Grateful Life

Dr. Martin Seligman, founder of positive psychology, has pointed out that gratitude is a major element of positive psychology. Gratitude can neutralize the bodily reactions brought upon by stress/negative emotions. A person who is able to experience gratitude not only possesses better psychological and physical health, they are also happier since they have the ability to bounce back from stress or adversities.

Although as compared to the United States, Hong Kong does not place as much emphasis on Thanksgiving, we could still show our gratitude towards our loved ones on other occasions such as Mother's Day and Father's Day. For instance, it was reported that TransWorld University in Taiwan held a large scale Mother's Day gratitude event to remind students, families and friends to express appreciation for every mother's hard work. Additionally, in the years 2013 and 2014, we have also created a few special dates to further spread the love and gratitude to those around us – 4 January 2013 (its sound in Chinese language analogous to "forever"), 20 May 2014 ("love you for life"), to name a few.

On top of festivals and special occasions, Dr. Seligman has also stated that we can experience gratitude anywhere, any time. We can be grateful when we are happy, but adversities also give us a chance to do so – when faced with difficulties in life, we could also be grateful that these challenges provide the opportunity for growth, learning, and greater maturity for future setbacks.

To effectively transform gratitude into a habit, one could start from the small details of everyday life. For example, at the office or at home, we could give specific appreciation for the things that our colleagues or family have done for us. Not only can this bring everyone closer together, the workplace/family atmosphere could also be enhanced as a result.

Dr. Seligman suggests doing a "gratitude visit" each month. This involves making home visits to those who have had a positive impact in our lives; they could be our mentors, people who took care of us when we were children, those who had been there when major life events took place... and so on. It is recommended that we state clearly this person's positive influence to him/her through verbal or written means.

Just as Rome was not built in a day, gratitude does take time to cultivate. If we are able to make it into a habit, however, it could bring us important, positive changes in life.

## LEAP 是指：

**L** eading Personal Effectiveness  
發展人才  
**E** nhancing Family Cohesiveness  
凝聚家庭

**A** chieving Team Success  
卓越團隊  
**P** romoting Corporate Wellness  
促進企業健康

## Cultivating a Grateful Heart

A few years ago, we received a hotline call from Yan, who was in her 20's. Her reason for calling was that she had had 12 jobs in the past 3 years. The consultant can still recall her voice clearly – it was full of anxiety. She was seen by us as soon as possible. The first thing she said was, "Please help me. I want to change jobs again. But I don't think any HR personnel would hire me anymore." The consultant listened as she elaborated on the dissatisfaction she had with her job, for instance, her unreasonable boss, the office politics, and work that keeps piling up.

Frankly, with years of counselling employees, Yan's case is not an uncommon one. I dare to say, however, that only 10% of those we had encountered really had the need to switch jobs due to job mismatch. The majority of callers, on the other hand, were affected and restricted by their own perspectives. When one looks at things with negative "lenses", everything becomes negative regardless of the reality. Through counselling, the consultant facilitated Yan to examine her own negative thoughts and their impact on her, thereby stimulating her motivation to change. People with a negative mindset often hold a narrow point of view, or even distort the truth to a situation. Apart from adapting a new and wider perspective, it is even more important to greet each day with gratitude.

It is often a very unnatural task for a negative person to learn to be grateful at the start. Positive psychology, however, believes that through establishing healthy attitudes and habits, one could change their pre-existing mode of thinking from the outside. Thus, in the process of counselling, the consultant encouraged Yan to change her pair of lenses. She was asked to explore things at the office that made her happy and were worthy of gratitude. This was difficult for her initially, and the consultant suggested her to begin with the little things. Gradually, she moved from seeing one positive thing per week to 2 to 3 times a week. Finally she was able to share good things from work with the consultant with a smile on her face; for example, a usually cold coworker taking the initiative to say hello to her, and having stable working hours. Yan slowly recognized and experienced the power of gratitude – the same situation can take on a completely different form when one is able to adapt another angle. For instance, a slow colleague could be seen as a meticulous person; a colleague who often interrupts could be seen as expressive and quick-witted.

Yan gradually acquired the habit of gratitude through counselling. She not only had fewer complaints about her job, she was actually liking it more and more, and has worked in her current company for more than 3 years now. Most importantly, she now leads a happy life full of positive energy.



### Chicken Soup for the Soul

One day, there was a burglary at former US President Franklin Roosevelt's home. A good friend of his wrote to him upon hearing this news to comfort him. Roosevelt replied, "Dear friend, thank you for your note of sympathy. Indeed, thank God I feel very safe now. Firstly, the burglar stole my things, but did not harm me or my family; secondly, the burglar only took a fraction of my belongings, and not all of my properties; thirdly and most fortunately, he is the burglar, not me."

Theft is most definitely an unfortunate event to anyone, but Roosevelt was still able to find 3 reasons to be grateful for in this situation.

When things are smooth, we tend to easily find things that we are thankful for. All too often unfavorable circumstances do occur and this is when Roosevelt's spirit comes in handy. Through gratitude, we could find hope in the midst of misfortunes, and strengthen our capacity in overcoming adversities.

