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THE POWER OF APPRECIATION

For most of us saying, “thank you” to the shop assistant, taxi driver, receptionist and even the bus driver is so ingrained, we don’t consciously think about the words we say. But when did you last thank your partner, children, parents, friends or work colleagues – for the things they regularly do for us? Today? Yesterday? Last week? Most people of course will have said “thank you” a dozen times (or more) to the people we love and care about within this time-frame, and on many occasions, it too will have rolled off your tongue without a thought. But now let me ask you, when did last say “thank you” for no reason? Not for when they made you a cup of tea, or completed a task, or asked how you were, but just because they are *who* they are? Thanking them for being in your life. This is much a rarer thing, and this is what I want to talk about today.

Appreciating the people in your life

We don’t mean to take people we care about for granted – but often we do. We assume they know we love them, that we care, that we are thinking of them, that we are thankful that they are in our lives. But telling them this regularly doesn’t roll off the tongue, especially telling some one how much we appreciate them *‘just for who they are’*. And even when there is good reason to thank that person, we sometimes forget.

Does it matter? Don’t actions speak louder than words? Yes... but also no. Saying something makes a difference both to the person hearing the words, and also *to you*. How? Because when we appreciate, when we are truly grateful for the people around us for all of the things they bring to us, then we will attract more of the same into our lives. How? Because it’s the Law of Attraction: like attracts like. What you focus on, comes into your life – whether or not you want it to.

Lets take an example of the reverse situation where no appreciation is being shown (because often the worst is often easier to see and relate to). John works for a harsh man, who demands things to be done in impossible time scales that means he often works late. Even when he occasionally pulls off an impossible deadline on time, his boss never thanks him. John never tells his boss what he thinks about him. Instead he curses him under his breath and complains loudly to his work colleagues. They add their list of

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grievances about the boss, and in doing so, confirm John's belief that his boss is an ungrateful, unreasonable, and uncaring man. When John gets home, he moans to his wife about his boss. He tells her in minute detail how awful his boss made his day.

In this story, who is at fault? The boss? Or could it be John? The Laws of Attraction state that 'like attracts like' (and by the way, that there is no exception to that rule) then what is John attracting into his life? In this scenario, a huge chunk of John's day is spent focusing on what he doesn't like, what is upsetting him, what he is ungrateful for. So, by focusing on so much negativity, that's what he will attract into his life in the future: more bad stuff.

How does John turn this situation around? Can he change the way his boss demands the work to be done? No. Can he make his boss appreciate him? No (although indirectly he might be able to – more later!). The answer is not what his boss does, it is in what John does. It is one of the most challenging things someone can do: start appreciating (truly and genuinely) the people they perceive to be causing them so much grief.

Am I asking that John be suddenly grateful for the overload of work his boss gives him? No! Of course not! But no-one is totally good or bad. If this was a true story, John would need to start looking for the good. These are some of the areas, he could look at:

- He has a job – his boss is employing him.
- He is being paid – maybe quite well: demanding bosses aren't always Scrouges!
- His boss's time demands might be teaching him how become more efficient.
- His boss's ungratefulness may be showing him how it feels not to be appreciated.
- The way his boss pushes him, might be helping him grow and develop his work skills.

And so on. It takes conscious effort to sometimes find things we can be grateful for in people we have come to dislike, but there is *always* something we can appreciate. Now, the trick is to start telling the people what is we *genuinely* appreciate. It can be really simple – "Boss, I just want to say thank you for my job". Imagine for a minute what John's boss might think or say to that. He might dismiss it, ask John if he's being scarastic, or just look totally bemused. If the next day, he was to say: "Boss, this is a tight

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deadline, but I appreciate that this is part of my job". What then? Who knows! that depends on who John's boss really is. He might become more harsh, or he might soften (it is totally surprising how people respond when we start appreciating them). BUT, far more importantly, by genuinely expressing his appreciation, John will change. Instead of cursing under his breathe about having to stay late, he will be aware that this is part of his job. His mindset will be different. He is less likely to join in with his work mates moaning about staying late and he is also less likely grumble to his wife too. Of course, appreciating that his job is a constant series of deadlines means he can now consciously to do something about it (instead of blaming his boss) – for example change jobs. This sounds blindingly obvious. But SO MANY people don't make this connection. They are so wound-up in their blaming that they loose sight of the fact they can CHOOSE to do something about it.

We can't change other people. We can't be responsible for other people – for what they choose to do, how they respond or react to us, but we can choose to change ourselves, with our responses and our behaviours.

In talking about appreciation, I chose to use a work example, because most of us will have worked at one time or another for what we thought was an ungrateful boss, and so we can relate to John. But what about other examples in your life. Are you truly and genuinely appreciating your children (including teenagers who think you're run a B&B and taxi service and generally show their appreciation with grunts instead of words, messy rooms, wet towels on the floor and music that's way too loud)? What about your parents – when did you last tell them you loved them? What about your spouse/partner? When did you genuinely tell them how much you respect and honour them for all they do and are? Perhaps they bear the brunt of bringing up the children, or they put more into the financial pot, or for they are the one who gives you affection, laughter, surprises, and tenderness? When did you last say: "I forget to tell you sometimes, but I want you to know that I really love (appreciate, honour, respect) you for all the that you do. I just want you know how grateful I am to have you in my life".

Why not try it today? Tell three people today. Then tell three more people tomorrow and the next day. Then add one more person for luck! That would make 10 people you

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genuinely expressed your gratitude to within the week. Now watch and see what happens. Become consciously aware of what saying this does – to them and to you. How did they react? Both then, and since? What changes did you notice about yourself? How do you feel about that person now, and about the thing you talked about in your appreciation? And if you would like to share your noticing with me – please do, because I will appreciate that too!

Appreciating the beauty in your life

One of the things I said would change if John expressed his appreciation to his boss, was a change in his mindset. He would literally start to see and feel differently both about his boss, and about himself. It's hard for me to substantiate this. I can't tell you how or why it works. I just know that it does. I have seen how it has changed my life. I have witnessed the profound changes in my clients who I have coached through this too. I know it works and so I would love for you to give it try – not just for the people in your life, but for everything in your life.

I would like you to ask you to start appreciating your home and all of your possessions. I ask that you appreciate your home town (city or village). I want you to notice the beauty that is all around you – the sun, sky, trees, plants, animals and every living thing. Why? Because, what you focus on, you bring into your life. Seeing the good, beauty, wonder of all things will bring more good, beauty and wonder into your life. Do you need to say this out loud? Well, maybe not! The thought of hundreds of you telling your local tree how much you love it, is a wonderful image in my mind, but others might misunderstand what you're doing! But next time you're out and about notice the beauty of nature. Stop for a moment. See the patterns and colours of the trees, plants and flowers. Hear the sounds of the animals birds and insects. Notice the weather in all it's variances (yes, it's easier to appreciate the blue skies and sunshine and not so much the grey skies and drizzle, but even drizzle has beauty in it!). Be aware of how the land undulates in hills and valleys. See the water in rivers, lakes and the seas. Watch the rising and or setting of the sun. Notice it all. Be in wonder of it all. Soak it in. Appreciating it, helps you expand your mindset. It helps you realise that you are connected to this. Will you give it a try? I hope so!

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