

## **(BODY) GRATITUDE**

Doesn't the word gratitude have a nice ring to it? Probably the more common understanding of this word stems from the word grateful - to be thankful. Or by twisting the word slightly, "great-full" reminds us of how "full of greatness" we are. Playing on the word gratitude again, it could mean great attitude or written differently "greatitude".

However we choose to twist, bend and mould these words, they all have positive connotations and all reflect a degree of self confidence, appreciation and esteem. In fact, a combination sums it up. Have a great attitude, stand in your greatness and be grateful for the fullness of your life experiences and life lessons to date, and ones that will come.

So how can you relate this to your body and your state of health, happiness, confidence and success? Easier said than done you might say – especially if you are used to seeing the glass half empty, bullying yourself or whinging and moaning about what your body is doing and what is playing out in your life.

### **Body gratitude – magnificence not deficiency**

How often do you look at your body and curse it rather than show gratitude to it?

Disempowering thoughts, words and actions may be very familiar to you. Kids are told not to bully each other, yet you may tolerate the self-bullying and down-putting of yourself and your body day in and day out and you may treat your body and you as the enemy, not your best friend.

Considering what you have put yourself through to date, aren't you amazed your body is still in one piece? You may hate your shape, weight, energy level, certain body parts, your appearance or something about your health, mood or degree of confidence and success, but how about instead of focussing on what you don't like, be grateful to your body for what it has got you through thus far? Instead of seeing your body and yourself as deficient or insignificant, start seeing your body and yourself as magnificent. Considering your body is not just a "stand-alone" item, gratitude is an "energising" energy that can revitalise the whole you – mind, body and soul. It is simply a change in focus and one that can absolutely alter how life looks.

Why be grateful to your head? For the great thoughts it has housed, or for protecting one of the "greatest computers" in history – your brain. Why be grateful to your breasts which you may or may not like? Your breasts may have breastfed your babes, cuddled a sad or hurt person or made love to someone special. Instead of berating your thighs, you may wish to thank them for where they have taken you and the things which you have stood up for. Instead of focussing on the looseness of your belly just after you have given birth, be grateful for the absolute miracle that you have been part of. If you are lying in hospital having had a heart attack from too much stress in the workplace, be grateful for your job but make some notes on how you will do things differently from now on.

You may even be grateful to your different body systems. Thank your immune system for getting you through your recent flu. Thank your skeletal system for holding you up, when you felt like crumbling into a heap. Thank your reproductive system for its "creating" ability. Don't just see these body systems literally, but use them as an analogy for life.

Acknowledge your ability to be healthy rather than focussing on ills. Acknowledge the extraordinary power that you possess to get you through any difficult situation. Acknowledge your brilliance and gains rather than your perceived lack or deficiencies.

Just as your physical body is made up of connected parts that depend on each other for optimum functioning and you have a mind-body-soul connection that is so intricately and perfectly

interrelated, also note the relationships you have – be it an intimate relationship, family, group or community of people or “larger body” you are a part of. Play the best part you can to contribute to that greater whole and be grateful for other “parts” that complete that whole body or group and which contribute to your own personal growth as well.

### **In sickness and health – Gratitude even through thick and thin**

Why be grateful when you are sick, unwell, stressed, under pressure at work or in relationships or going through some other hard stuff? I am not suggesting you go about willing some ill-health upon yourself to get some perhaps well deserved rest. When you are laid up however it is easy to grumble and groan, complain and knock the whole experience. Why not be in that moment of unwellness, tiredness and just experience it and be grateful for what it provides for you. Find some positive aspect to whatever challenges, obstacles or disappointments you are facing. Perhaps you have gained new insights. Perhaps you have been asked to reach out for some assistance when normally you would staunchly go about “getting a job done”. There will no doubt be some benefits of what you are presently experiencing – you just might have to dig deep and find the gold.

### **Grief cycle or Gratitude cycle - a turning point**

At any point of change, loss or transition, there is usually grief to some degree – some adaptation from what was to what now is. It is not always the loss in itself, but the perception of that loss and what you take that to mean about you, your body and about life can look. That perception of “I am not good or strong enough and nor is my body” can set up a series of behaviours that can impact and even create further “losses” or may determine how you might handle subsequent losses. I call this the body deficiency cycle. Changing both your perception of the loss and altering the subsequent behaviours, I believe is key.

Unrelenting grief and patterns of body deficiency syndrome wear the body, mind and soul down. Consider for example the huge emotional toll that grieving takes – whether that grief is a result of loss or change in fertility, job, relationship, career, health, body functions, aging or something else. The whole body can suffer from the tiredness, sadness and general strain of the situation and associated grief. To cope with this, you may eat irregularly, forget to nourish yourself, worry yourself sick or find little time to do soul enhancing activities. To work through your grief becomes even harder. The antidepressants or the quick fix may come out, different pain may find its way into your body, you find yourself in bed not wanting to come out from under the covers or you may try to escape “your life” by finding other distractions, addictions, medications, relationships or activities to dull everything down or spice it up, albeit temporarily. Can you see that this body deficiency syndrome can spiral things downwards for you at a fair rate of knots?

It is important to develop strategies to grieve fully and to acknowledge loss, but at some point in time however, there will be moments and opportunities to jump on a different cycle – the gratitude cycle – noticing, acknowledging and being grateful for the gains you continue to make, going through the experience and navigating your way successfully though it. Whether you do gratitude in giant leaps or baby steps, the power of gratitude is one that will impact your body and your ability to live vitally again and it will move your life in an upward spiral.

### **Pivotal point of power or powerless – gratitude is the key to unlock your personal power**

Write down what you are presently going through – be it marriage difficulties, stress at work, difficult people to deal with, health issues or decisions to make. Start being grateful, great-full and show “greatitude” for whatever situation you find yourself in, and notice what changes. Your identity to date may have been formed around the drama of difficult situations, but decide to take on an identity of calmness and acceptance knowing that such changes, transitions or perceived difficulties or obstacles can be pivotal points of power, not powerlessness.

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