

BEHAVIORAL & FINANCIAL INSIGHTS

Practicing Gratitude – A Message Worth Repeating

'Tis the season of gratitude! Thanksgiving is perhaps one of the most underappreciated holidays, yet most needed. Since Thanksgiving is less marketable than other “Hallmark Holidays,” there is little publicity focusing on the essence of it. Instead, the message, by association, is now more about consumerism. The focus tends not to be on giving thanks, but rather on getting a good deal on some product – with retailers now starting their “Black Friday” sales *before* Thanksgiving.

Unless we are intentional in our thoughts, we too may spend the Thanksgiving season thinking of things we *want* rather than things we are *grateful* for. One surefire way to create happiness, regardless of our circumstances, is to practice gratitude. We may not be able to control our circumstances; however, we can control how we respond, and whether we *choose* to be grateful.

Choosing to See the Good

With so much to be thankful for, most of us probably don't spend enough time consciously counting our blessings. There is no doubt that when things go our way, when we get our desired outcome, it is easy to feel grateful and be content. That's like riding a bike downhill – it doesn't take much when things are easy. And while we may even do our best to be thankful, it is often short-lived or easily neglected, overshadowed by our daily to-do list. With every decision, every life event, it is our choice to see the good in it. Even bad outcomes and poor decisions can become significant positives if we learn from them and become better individuals as a result – but we must choose to do that.

There are people who are thankful for the smallest things – you probably know a few. They are like magnets. We want to be around them because they exude positivity, love, and joy – they are “batteries-included” people. Then there are those who are impossible to please, those we can't wait to get away from. They drain our energy. I call these “batteries-not-included” people. Choose wisely who you are around. Like it or not, we all have a finite reservoir of emotional energy. Furthermore, we tend to take on traits of those we surround ourselves with. Want to be more grateful? To get a natural “recharge” or psychological boost? Spend more time with people who practice gratitude regularly.

Warmest wishes for a happy Thanksgiving holiday!