

## **Gratitude: *Being Thankful for the Unseen People in Our Lives***

**Source:** Captain J. Charles Plumb, United State Navy (retired), motivational speaker/author  
<http://speaker.charlieplumb.com/about-captain/>

On Charlie Plumb's 75th mission during the Vietnam War, just five days before the end of his tour, Plumb was shot down over Hanoi, taken prisoner, tortured, and then spent the next 2,103 days as a Prisoner Of War. He is currently a renowned motivational speaker documenting his life from a farm kid in Kansas to the "Top Gun" Navy Fighter Weapons School to Prisoner of War. His "Parachute Packer Story" reminds us to be grateful for the unseen people in our lives.

### **Parachute Packer Story from Insights Into Excellence, by Charlie Plumb**

Recently, I was sitting in a restaurant in Kansas City. A man about two tables away kept looking at me. I didn't recognize him. A few minutes into our meal he stood up and walked over to my table, looked down at me, pointed his finger in my face and said, "You're Captain Plumb."

I looked up and I said, "Yes sir, I'm Captain Plumb."

He said, "You flew jet fighters in Vietnam. You were on the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down. You parachuted into enemy hands and spent six years as a prisoner of war."

I said, "How in the world did you know all that?"

He replied, "Because, I packed your parachute."

I was speechless. I staggered to my feet and held out a very grateful hand of thanks. This guy came up with just the proper words. He grabbed my hand, he pumped my arm and said, "I guess it worked."

"Yes sir, indeed it did", I said, "and I must tell you I've said a lot of prayers of thanks for your nimble fingers, but I never thought I'd have the opportunity to express my gratitude in person."

He said, "Were all the panels there?"

"Well sir, I must shoot straight with you," I said, "of the eighteen panels that were supposed to be in that parachute, I had fifteen good ones. Three were torn, but it wasn't your fault, it was mine. I jumped out of that jet fighter at a high rate of speed, close to the ground. That's what tore the panels in the chute. It wasn't the way you packed it."

"Let me ask you a question," I said, "do you keep track of all the parachutes you pack?"

"No" he responded, "it's enough gratification for me just to know that I've served."

I didn't get much sleep that night. I kept thinking about that man. I kept wondering what he might have looked like in a Navy uniform – a Dixie cup hat, a bib in the back and bell bottom trousers. I wondered how many times I might have passed him on board the Kitty Hawk. I wondered how many times I might have seen him and not even said "good morning", "how are you", or anything because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor. How many hours did he spend on that long wooden table in the bowels of that ship weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of those chutes? I could have cared less...until one day my parachute came along and he packed it for me.

So the philosophical question here is this: How's your parachute packing coming along? Who looks to you for strength in times of need? And perhaps, more importantly, who are the special people in your life who provide you the encouragement you need when the chips are down? Perhaps it's time right now to give those people a call and thank them for packing your chute.

### **Questions**

- Who are all the unseen people that in some way help you have a positive experience during a typical day from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed?
- Who are the people you see every day that are in some way supporting you?
- Who are you supporting and helping even though they might not know it?
- What is the most important message in the Parachute Packer Story?
- How is a parachute a metaphor for gratitude?

## Gratitude: 22 Inspirational Quotes to Promote a Way of Living

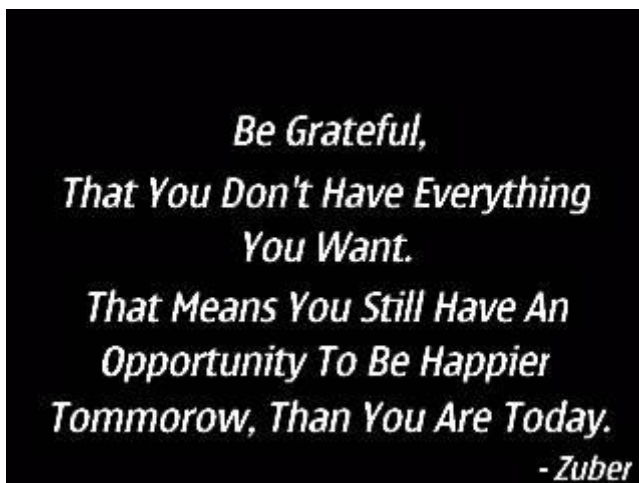
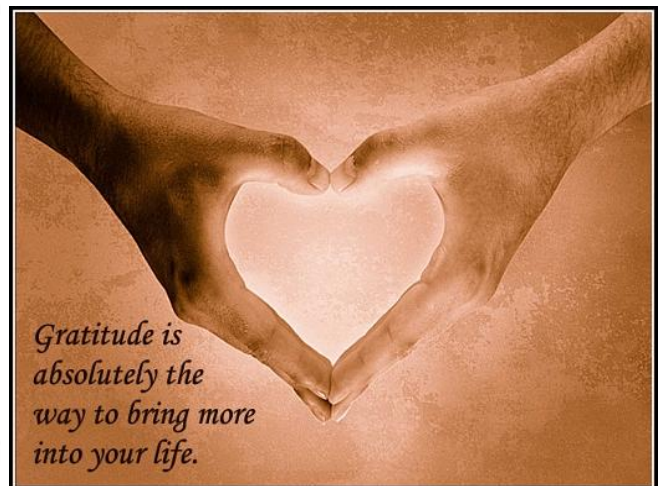
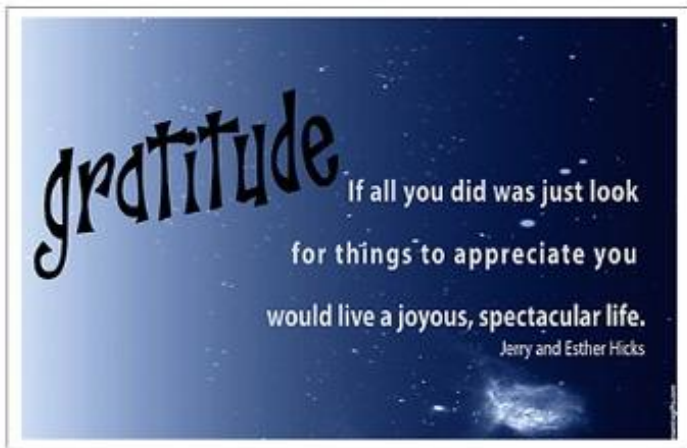
Source: Nicole Bandes – Founder, CEO of Golden Eagles Coaching

<http://goldeneaglescoaching.com>

Golden Eagles Coaching was founded in February, 2010. Their goal was to create a trusted source for creating one-on-one and group programs that guide individuals in overcoming the obstacles that prevent them from reaching success. The name Golden Eagles is based on the belief that eagles are amazing creatures that do not allow challenges to prevent them from soaring. Eagles represent strength, power, vision, focus and extraordinary heights. Golden eagles tend to work together as teams in their hunting efforts thus showing that even these magnificent birds can benefit from working with others and not being completely independent. Nicole Bandes is the bestselling author of *Positivity on Purpose: Intentionally Create More Abundance, Wealth and Happiness*. The posters below are her favorites regarding the concept of gratitude.

### Questions:

- Of the 22, what is your favorite quote about gratitude? Why?
- What quote reminds you of a person in your life you are thankful for?
- Who has thanked you for something you have done for them? What did you do?
- Who in your life is top on your list for a “thank you?”



There is always,  
always, always  
something to be  
thankful for.

Let us rise up and be thankful,  
for if we didn't learn a lot today,  
at least we learned a little, and if  
we didn't learn a little, at least  
we didn't get sick, and if we got  
sick, at least we didn't die; so, let  
us all be thankful. ~ *Buddha*



"It's a sign of mediocrity when  
you demonstrate gratitude with  
moderation."

-Roberto Benigni

As we express our *gratitude*,  
we must never forget that the  
highest *appreciation* is not to  
utter words, but to *live by them*.

- John F Kennedy

**FEELING  
GRATITUDE  
AND NOT  
EXPRESSING IT,  
IS LIKE  
WRAPPING A  
PRESENT AND  
NOT GIVING IT.**

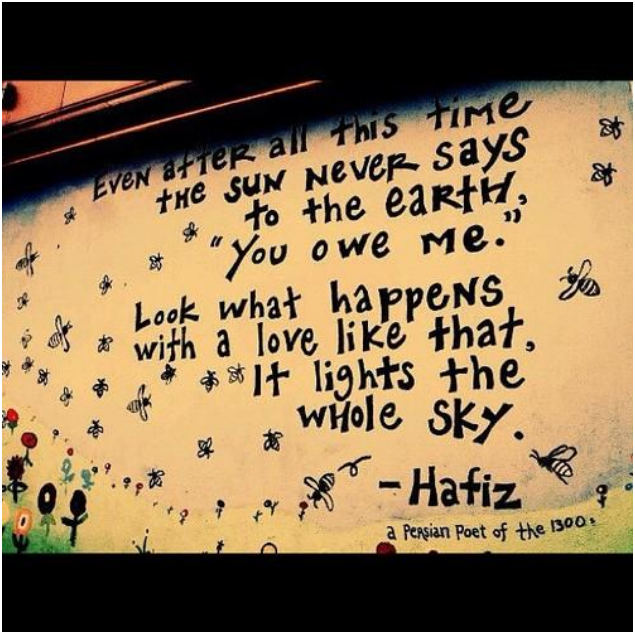
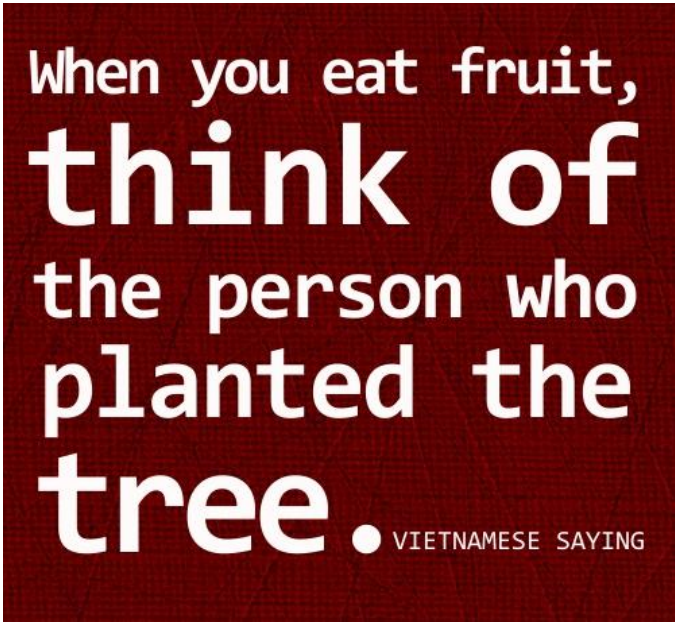
William Ward

"When you are  
grateful, fear  
disappears and  
abundance  
appears."

~ Anthony Robbins

**Gratitude**  
is the best  
**attitude.**

- Author Unknown



**Thanks to those who hated me,**  
you made me stronger.

**Thanks to those who loved me,**  
you made my heart go fonder.

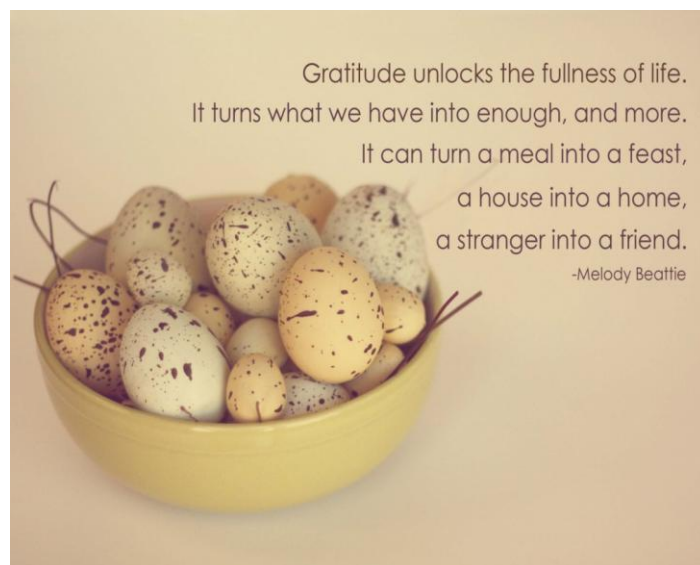
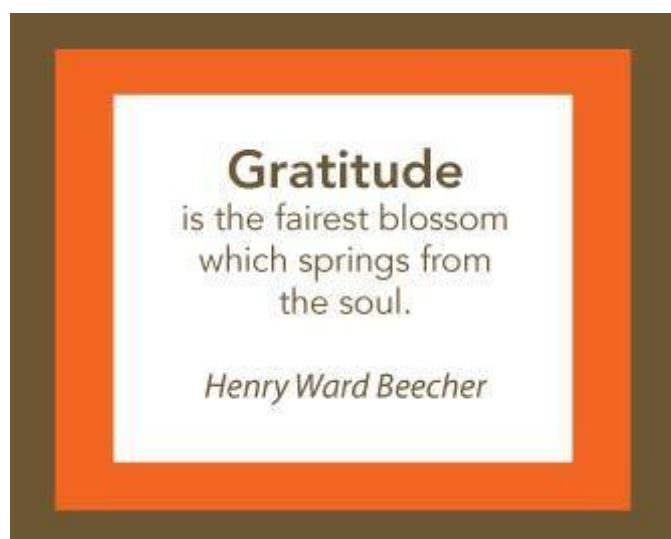
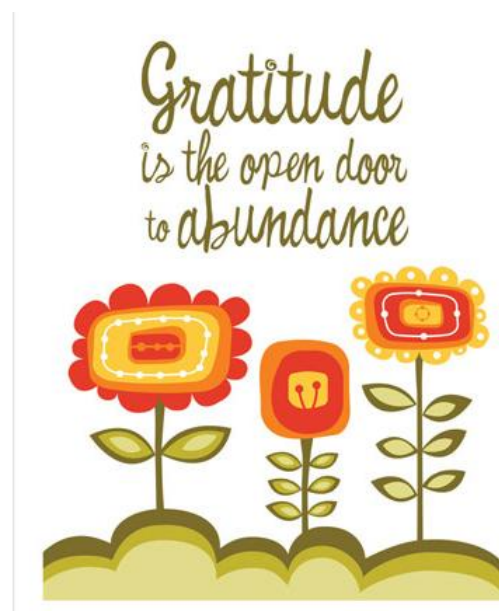
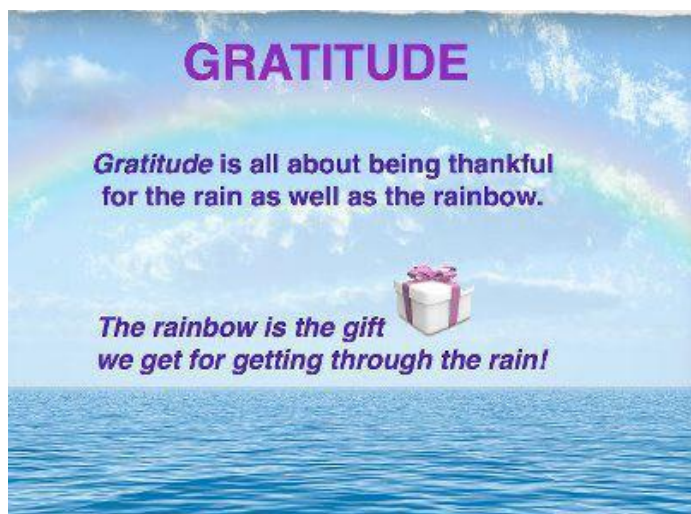
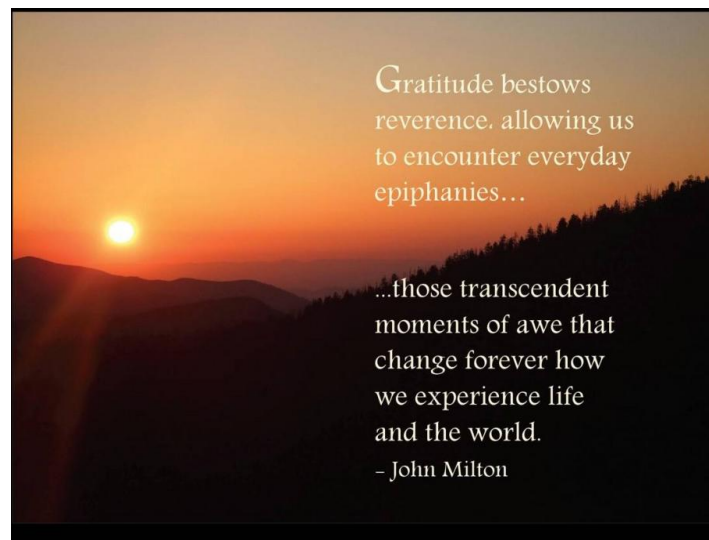
**Thanks to those who cared,**  
you made me feel important.

**Thanks to those who entered into my life**  
you made who i am today.

**Thanks to those who left,**  
you showed me that nothing lasts forever.

**Thanks to those who stayed,**  
you showed me true friendship.

**Thanks to those who listened**  
you made me like i was worth it.



# Gratitude: An Article about the Benefits of Gratitude

Source: [Wall Street Journal, http://www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com)

By Melinda Beck

## Thank You. No, Thank You

*Grateful People Are Happier, Healthier Long After the Leftovers Are Gobbled Up*

It turns out, giving thanks is good for your health.

A growing body of research suggests that maintaining an attitude of gratitude can improve psychological, emotional and physical well-being.

Adults who frequently feel grateful have more energy, more optimism, more social connections and more happiness than those who do not, according to studies conducted over the past decade. They're also less likely to be depressed, envious, greedy or alcoholics. They earn more money, sleep more soundly, exercise more regularly and have greater resistance to viral infections.

Now, researchers are finding that gratitude brings similar benefits in children and adolescents. Kids who feel and act grateful tend to be less materialistic, get better grades, set higher goals, complain of fewer headaches and stomach aches and feel more satisfied with their friends, families and schools than those who don't, studies show.

"A lot of these findings are things we learned in kindergarten or our grandmothers told us, but we now have scientific evidence to prove them," says Jeffrey J. Froh, an assistant professor of psychology at Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y., who has conducted much of the research with children.

"The key is not to leave it on the Thanksgiving table," says Robert Emmons, a professor of psychology at the University of California-Davis and a pioneer in gratitude research. And, he notes, "with the realization that one has benefited comes the awareness of the need to reciprocate." Philosophers as far back as the ancient Greeks and Romans cited gratitude as an indispensable human virtue, but social scientists are just beginning to study how it develops and the effects it can have.

The research is part of the "positive psychology" movement, which focuses on developing strengths rather than alleviating disorders. Cultivating gratitude is also a form of cognitive-behavioral therapy, which holds that changing peoples' thought patterns can dramatically affect their moods.

It's possible, of course, to over-do expressions of gratitude, particularly if you try to show it with a gift. "Thanking someone in such a way that is disproportionate to the relationship—say, a student giving her teacher an iPod—will create resentment, guilt, anger and a sense of obligation," says Dr. Froh.

Gratitude can also be misused to exert control over the receiver and enforce loyalty. Dr. Froh says you can avoid this by being empathic toward the person you are thanking—and by honestly assessing your motivations.

In an upcoming paper in the *Journal of Happiness Studies*, Dr. Froh and colleagues surveyed 1,035 high-school students and found that the most grateful had more friends and higher GPAs, while the

most materialistic had lower grades, higher levels of envy and less satisfaction with life. "One of the best cures for materialism is to make somebody grateful for what they have," says Dr. Froh. Much of the research on gratitude has looked at associations, not cause-and-effect relationships; it's possible that people who are happy, healthy and successful simply have more to be grateful for. But in a landmark study in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* in 2003, Dr. Emmons and University of Miami psychologist Michael McCullough showed that counting blessings can actually make people feel better.

The researchers randomly divided more than 100 undergraduates into three groups. One group was asked to list five things they were grateful for during the past week for 10 consecutive weeks. The second group listed five things that annoyed them each week and the third group simply listed five events that had occurred. They also completed detailed questionnaires about their physical and mental health before, during and after.

Those who listed blessings each week had fewer health complaints, exercised more regularly and felt better about their lives in general than the other two groups. Drs. Froh and Emmons conducted a similar study with 221 sixth- and seventh-graders from Candlewood Middle School in Dix Hills, N.Y., an affluent area on Long Island. Although the effects weren't as dramatic as with the adults, the students in the gratitude group did report a higher level of satisfaction with school and more optimism than the students who listed irritations, according to the study in the *Journal of School Psychology* in 2008.

As simple as it sounds, gratitude is actually a demanding, complex emotion that requires "self-reflection, the ability to admit that one is dependent upon the help of others, and the humility to realize one's own limitations," Dr. Emmons says.

Being grateful also forces people to overcome what psychologists call the "negativity bias"—the innate tendency to dwell on problems, annoyances and injustices rather than upbeat events. Focusing on blessings can help ward off depression and build resilience in times of stress, grief or disasters, according to studies of people impacted by the Sept. 11 terror attacks and Hurricane Katrina.

Can people learn to look on the bright side, want what they have and be grateful for it? Experts believe that about 50% of such temperament is genetic, but the rest comes from experience, so there's ample opportunity for change. "Kids and adults both can choose how they feel and how they look at the world," says Andrew Greene, principal of Candlewood Middle School, who says that realization was one of the lasting legacies of Dr. Froh's research there.

Some experts believe that children don't develop true gratitude until they can experience empathy, which usually occurs around age 7. But researchers at Yale University's Infant Cognition Center have shown that infants as young as 6-months old prefer characters who help to those who hinder others. To help lay the groundwork for gratefulness, Dr. Froh says he asks his 4-year-old son, James, each night what was his favorite thing about the day and what he is looking forward to tomorrow.

*To still be working at 80. To still have the woman I married 56 years ago. To get up each morning and see flowers, not roots. I'm not rich, but I'm grateful and happy.*

—Harold Melnick

For older children and adults, one simple way to cultivate gratitude is to literally count your blessings. Keep a journal and regularly record whatever you are grateful for that day. Be specific. Listing "my friends, my school, my dog" day after day means that "gratitude fatigue" has set in, Dr. Froh says. Writing "my dog licked my face when I was sad" keeps it fresher. Some people do this on their Facebook or MySpace pages, or in one of dozens of online gratitude groups. There's an iPod app for gratitude journaling, too. The real benefit comes in changing how you experience the world. Look for things to be grateful for, and you'll start seeing them everywhere.

A Buddhist exercise, called Naikan self-reflection, asks people to ponder daily: "What have I received from...? What have I given to...? and What trouble have I caused...?" Acknowledging those who touched your life—from the barista who made your coffee to the engineer who drove your train—and reflecting on how you reciprocated reinforces humbleness and interdependence. Delivering your thanks in person can be particularly powerful. One study found that fourth-graders who took a "gratitude visit" felt better about themselves even two months later—particularly those whose moods were previously low.

Adopting a more upbeat mind-set helps facilitate gratitude, too. Instead of bonding with friends over gripes and annoyances, try sharing what you're grateful for. To avoid sounding boastful, focus on giving credit to other people, as in, "My mom took a whole day off from work to get to my game." Studies show that using negative, derogatory words—even as you talk to yourself—can darken your mood as well. Fill your head with positive thoughts, express thanks and encouragement aloud and look for something to be grateful for, not criticize, in those around you, especially loved ones. New York psychiatrist Drew Ramsey says that's an essential tool for surviving the holidays. "Giving thanks for them helps you deal with the craziness that is part of every family," he says.

Last, if you find you take too much for granted, try the "It's a Wonderful Life" approach: image what life would be like without a major blessing, like a spouse, a child or a job. In a 2008 study in the *Journal of Personal Social Psychology*, researchers found that when college students wrote essays in which they were asked to "mentally subtract" a positive event from their lives, they were subsequently more grateful for it than students whose essays simply focused on the event. The "George Bailey effect" was modest, the authors noted, but even small boosts in positive emotions can make life more satisfying.

## Questions

- How does displaying gratitude improve our psychological, emotional and physical well-being?
- How are the positive effects of gratitude exhibited in children? In adults?
- How have researchers attempted to document the positive effects of gratitude?
- Explain Dr. Emmons statement that gratitude is actually a demanding, complex emotion that requires "self-reflection, the ability to admit that one is dependent upon the help of others, and the humility to realize one's own limitations."
- What are some ways you can cultivate the gratitude?
- What is the main theme of the classic Jimmy Stewart movie, "It's a Wonderful Life?"



## Gratitude: *How Grateful are You?*

**Source:** Dr. Emmons, Psychiatry (Edgmont). Nov 2010

A brief, six-item, self-report measure that assesses one's disposition to experience gratitude.

Using the scale below, indicate how much you agree with each statement.

**1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=slightly disagree, 4=neutral, 5=slightly agree, 6=agree, 7=strongly agree**

\_\_\_1. I have so much in life for which to be thankful.

\_\_\_2. If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.

\_\_\_3. When I look at the world, I don't see much for which to be grateful.\*

\_\_\_4. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.

\_\_\_5. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history.

\_\_\_6. Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone. \*

### Scoring Instructions:

- Add up your scores for items 1, 2, 4, and 5.
- Reverse your scores for items 3 and 6. That is, if you scored a "7," give yourself a "1," if you scored a "6," give yourself a "2," ;etc.
- Add the reversed scores for items 3 and 6 to the total from Step 1. This is your total GQ-6 score. This number should be between 6 and 42.

### Interpretation:

- 25th Percentile: a score below 35 (bottom quartile)
- 50th Percentile: a score below 38 (bottom half)
- 75th Percentile: a score of 41 (higher than 75%)
- Top 13%: a score of 42

### Psychological strategies that may enhance feelings of gratitude

- Journaling about things for which to be grateful
- Thinking about someone for whom you are grateful
- Writing/sending a letter to someone for whom you are grateful
- Meditating on gratitude (present moment awareness)
- Undertaking the "Count Your Blessings" exercise (at the end of the week, writing down three things for which you were grateful)
- Practicing saying "thank you" in a sincere and meaningful way
- Writing thank you notes

## SOME TECHNIQUES TO HELP KIDS BE GRATEFUL



**Keep a gratitude journal** ▲  
Note one to three good things that happened during the day—and be specific.



◀ **Find a 'gratitude accountability buddy'**  
Swap gratitude lists with a friend; acknowledging where gratitude is due will keep it from sounding like bragging.



**Go on a gratitude visit** ▲  
Write a letter of thanks to someone who has helped you in the past. Read it in person or over the phone.



**Watch your language** ▶  
Using disparaging words, even in talking to yourself, reinforces negative thoughts.



**Pause mindfully** ▲  
Several times a day, stop whatever you are doing and focus on the sounds, smells, touches around you.

**Savor good times** ▶  
Photographs, drawings and written accounts help reinforce memories. Collect them in scrapbooks or post around your home.



▶ **Count blessings, not sheep**  
Review events and people to be grateful for during the day as you're falling asleep.

### You're Welcome

Researchers believe gratitude may actually help your mental and physical health.

Source: WSJ reporting

#### For adults:

- More optimistic
- More social satisfaction
- Less envy
- Less depression
- Fewer physical complaints
- Better sleep
- More exercise

#### For children:

- Better grades
- Higher goals
- More satisfaction with lives, friends, family and school
- Less materialistic
- More desire to give back