

the power of gratitude

BY DR. BARBARA DE ANGELIS

“I’m asking you to feel what the actual vibration of tuning in to gratitude does to you: It expands you; it opens you;

Right now, think of someone or something for which you feel really grateful. It could be your children, your partner, the home you live in, or the work you’re privileged to do. It could be your devoted animal companions or loving human companions. It could be the recovery you’ve made from an illness, a door of opportunity that’s opened for you, or someone who’s made an enormous difference in your life. It could be a beautiful place you’ve had the privilege of visiting in the outside world, or a sacred place you’ve touched inside of yourself.

Place your awareness in the center of your chest, around your heart, and notice for a moment what you’re experiencing when you’re feeling grateful. Do you feel more open or closed? Open. Do you feel more contracted or expanded? Expanded. Do you feel more agitated or peaceful? Peaceful.

I’m not asking you to notice the thoughts

you have about the person or thing for which you’re grateful. Instead, I’m asking you to feel what the actual vibration of tuning in to gratitude does to you: It expands you; it opens you; it ushers you into a momentary state of peace and contentment. It brings you immediately back to your Highest.

I often hear people say that as part of their intention to live an awakened life, they “practice an attitude of gratitude.” I’m sure you’ve heard this phrase, or even used it yourself. What does this mean to most of us? It means we try to be positive, to acknowledge the good things that are happening, to verbalize what we are grateful for, and to have a positive attitude toward life.

It is time to make a Soul Shift from thinking of gratitude as a mental or intellectual way of looking at things—an attitude—to understanding gratitude as a dynamic vibrational experience.



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SOUL SHIFT: SHIFT FROM TRYING TO HAVE AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE TO LIVING GRATITUDE AS A VIBRATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Simply put, gratitude is not an attitude. It's one of the transformative inner actions I spoke of when I defined Soul Shifts, an action originating from and in alignment with the highest spiritual truths. It's an opening up in the presence of something that we value.

We can't experience gratitude in our head. That's not the feeling of it, but rather the thought. The actual experience of gratitude occurs first in the heart, and is the result of our choosing to take that auspicious inner action, to make a Soul Shift.

Gratitude is not an attitude in our mind. Gratitude is an internal experience of fullness and expansion in the heart, an expansion that spontaneously arises from the recognition of love, of goodness, and of grace. In its highest

form, therefore, gratitude is not a practice. It is a living expression of our own expanded consciousness. When we understand the vibrational mechanics of gratitude, we realize that it is one of the easiest and most effective ways to experience an instant Soul Shift.

SOUL SHIFT: SHIFT FROM CONDITIONAL GRATITUDE TO GRATITUDE BEYOND CONDITIONS

Many of us give ourselves permission to experience gratitude when we're happy with the way things are going, with the way people are treating us, and with what the universe is bringing to our doorstep. It's easy to be grateful when we approve of what's taking place in our life. But what happens when people are doing things that hurt us? What happens when we're faced with circumstances that are painful or challenging? What happens when events unfold that we don't

understand or feel are terribly unfair?

Our spiritual intention to have a consciousness of gratitude means absolutely nothing if we're not living it. It means nothing if our gratitude is conditional. It means nothing if, when the slightest thing goes wrong, we become angry with Spirit. It means nothing if, when we don't have something turn out as we hoped it would, we angrily conclude that the universe is against us, and forget everything good that blesses us each day.

My observation is: When we become terrified of feeling discomfort, we lose any tolerance we have for enduring what is not comfortable or pleasant. This, by the way, is what addictions are about. Those of you who have had challenges with addiction in your life probably have been plagued by a “feels good or feels bad” mindset, which often is the cause for the need to anaesthetize the “bad” feelings with alcohol, drugs, food, and so forth. I've actually had many students and clients free

themselves from addictive habits once and for all by realizing that, whenever they experience “not good” feelings, they don't have to try to immediately get rid of them. Instead, they can choose to see, feel, and know what's taking place, and use what they discover as doorways to more healing and consciousness.

What feels good or what feels bad are not always correct and accurate measurements to use on the spiritual path. Sometimes things that don't feel good are good for us, and things that feel good are bad for us. Remember that it's our “black-and-white” and “either-or” thinking that causes us to swing from one stance to another: *I'm uncomfortable, so life is terrible, or Things are great with me, so I'm grateful and trust the universe.*

What if instead, we practiced the Soul Shift of looking at this from a more expanded point of view? You can be in discomfort and still be grateful. You can acknowledge that you are in an uncomfortable or unhappy time, but



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also allow your consciousness to notice and feel gratitude for the lessons you are learning, or the friends who are supporting you, or the unexpected blessings your challenge is bringing you.

SOUL SHIFT: SHIFT FROM DISQUALIFYING YOUR GRATITUDE DURING CHALLENGING TIMES TO UNDERSTANDING THAT YOU CAN BE BOTH GRATEFUL AND UNCOMFORTABLE AT THE SAME TIME

This Soul Shift offers us a profound and expanded approach to gratitude. It will create possibilities for you that haven't existed before—a way to transmute the vibrationally contractive energy of challenges by adding the vibrationally expansive energy of gratitude. Don't abandon your gratitude just because you're temporarily unhappy or uncomfortable. You need to find your gratitude even when you're suffering, frightened, or in pain.

That's actually when you need it the most.

Being Grateful for What Isn't Happening

“The best things in life are not only free, they are mostly invisible.”

— **Thaddeus Golas**

We've all heard platitudes that tell us not to get upset about “the small stuff,” but as I'm sure you know, this is easier said than done. This is one of the great blessings of gratitude—being in a constant state of gratitude helps us put things into a true perspective.

Something is seen as small in proportion to something else that is bigger. For example, you may have grown up in a house that you thought was a normal size until you visited a friend's home that was enormous. Suddenly, your house seemed tiny by comparison. So we have to put our attention on bigger things for something else to be seen as insignificant. This is where gratitude comes in. We've seen

that it creates vibrational expansion, which helps us to rise up and above those things that would weigh us down. When we are consistently saturated with gratitude, we spontaneously put things in their proper perspective.

When we practice noticing the big things we're grateful for, the small things, annoyances, and disappointments won't overwhelm us so easily. We remember how we are blessed in every moment and won't get caught in the small pettiness of life that can suck the joy right out of us, not to mention make everyone who has to be around us miserable, too.

Gratitude blesses you. It opens you so that more can come in. It literally expands the vibrational space around you. When you're living in that expansive space, more of everything will flow into your life.

Gratitude for the absence of things is just as important as gratitude for the presence of things. We tend to look for situations, people,

or possessions for which we can be grateful. However, you can also practice having a consciousness of gratitude for things that no longer exist—for instance, circumstances or individuals that have been removed from our lives by our own will, or by fate, or by divine intervention.

SOUL SHIFT: SHIFT FROM ONLY BEING GRATEFUL FOR WHAT'S PRESENT TO ALSO BEING GRATEFUL FOR WHAT IS ABSENT

Think of a situation or circumstance that used to exist in your life, but no longer does. Now feel how grateful you are for its absence.

I'd like to introduce a wonderful Soul Shift Recalibration Practice called: “Celebrating the Absence of Things.” Each day, pay attention to the gifts you're receiving from the absence of things. Here are some examples:

» *The absence of pain after you heal from an*



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injury or illness.

- » *The absence of tension from a person who no longer works with you.*
- » *The absence of ants invading your kitchen when they finally disappear.*
- » *The absence of the lawn you don't have to tend now that you've moved from a house to an apartment.*

SOUL SHIFT: SHIFT FROM BEING A RELUCTANT AND RESISTANT RECEIVER TO A GRACIOUS RECEIVER

Learning to be a gracious receiver is not about becoming more verbally effusive, or complimenting the other person. It's the energy of allowing yourself to vibrationally receive someone's love, and allowing that love to reverberate inside of you. When you fully receive, someone else can tell, because they can feel the vibration of your receiving in their own heart.

How Receiving Creates Abundance

“If the only prayer you say in your life is ‘thank you,’ that would suffice.”

— **Meister Eckhart**

When most people think of the word abundance, they associate it with desires such as: *I want a beautiful home and possessions. I want lots of clients. I want money. I want love.* But the wanting is just the first step in creating abundance. Having something manifest is the second step. The third, and probably most important step, is the receiving.

Many of us are good “wanters,” but we may not be good receivers. We all have a lot of practice wanting, but when we begin to get the things we wanted, we are often so unskilled at receiving that it's almost as if we never got them at all.

Appreciation is a form of abundance. Receiving is a form of abundance. When you are a good receiver, the universe wants to offer you more.

Imagine that you're giving somebody you love a foot massage, and they just sit there silently, not making a sound. You ask, “How is it?” and they answer, “It's okay.” All of a sudden, you start to think, *My hands hurt. I think I've done this for long enough.* And you stop. Now, what if when you asked how it felt, that same person said, “Oh my gosh, this is the best foot massage I've ever experienced. I am in ecstasy.” You probably would think, *Okay, then I won't stop. Let's do it for another 15 minutes.* Their full and grateful receiving would create the desire for more to flow out from you. It is human nature to want to feel as if we're making an impact.

When you block your energetic door for receiving, it creates a tremendous contraction and tension inside of you. Have you ever watched someone trying to give their young child a spoonful of bitter medicine? The child crunches up their face, squeezes their eyes shut, and bites down on their lips, all in the hopes that they can resist receiving the terri-

ble concoction. Their mouth is closed in defiance, and their energy field closes off as well.

Receiving has the opposite effect: It expands you. It opens you. Think about what it takes to receive something—you have to open your hands, or you have to open your mouth, or you have to open your front door. Opening is an expansive action, and that includes what occurs when we open on the inside. When we're in the habit of receiving, we are also cultivating the habit of opening. The more we open vibrationally, the more space we make for receiving everything.

Blessings or Burdens?

“We wait for God to bless us while God waits for us to accept the blessing.”

— **Betsy Otter Thompson**

Every day, all of us experience things that are actually our blessings, but that in our mind, we've somehow turned into our burdens. *I'm*



“Can you look at the things you’ve been feeling burdened by and transmute them into blessings?”

sure I don’t do that, you may be thinking. Oh no? Read on ...

“I just got home from work, and my children want to play with me and show me what they made at school today. I’m soooo tired. Oh well, I guess I have to spend a little time with them. Maybe if I turn on the TV, they’ll get distracted, and I can at least look at my iPad while they play.” **Blessing or burden?**

“There is absolutely nothing in the refrigerator. Why can’t I just have a Saturday morning to rest? I suppose I should go out to the supermarket and stock up on everything I need for the week. But I hate shopping on the weekend—it’s always so crowded.” **Blessing or burden?**

We often lose perspective about what is real and true and precious in life, and allow a veil of forgetfulness to fall over our eyes: A family who loves you is a blessing, not a burden.

Having to buy all the food you want whenever you want it, and knowing that fresh, healthy food is readily available with no shortages, is a blessing, not a burden.

SOUL SHIFT: SHIFT FROM BE-MOANING THINGS AS BURDENS TO CHERISHING THEM AS BLESSINGS

It’s so easy to allow our gratitude for the blessings and abundance in life to be swallowed up by the contractive habits of grumbling, complaining, and whining about situations, possessions, and people whose existence we should be cherishing.

When we decide that something is a burden, we draw all of the grace and joy out of it. When we see something as a blessing, we stop experiencing it as effortful and allow it to expand us. The same task or experience can uplift or exhaust us, depending on how we hold it in our heart. Can you look at the things you’ve been feeling burdened by and

transmute them into blessings? You can burden or bless yourself in this lifetime. The limited ego will always see burdens. Your Highest Self will always see blessings. Every moment you choose—blessing or burden?

This Soul Shift alone can change your life. You are part of the Great Miracle unfolding around you. Delight in this! Open yourself to grace.

Excerpted from Soul Shifts: Transformative Wisdom for Creating a Life of Authentic Awakening, Emotional Freedom and Practical Spirituality by Dr. Barbara De Angelis. Available for purchase here.

Dr. Barbara De Angelis is one of the most influential teachers of our time in the field of personal and spiritual development. For the past 35 years, she has reached tens of millions of people throughout the world with her inspirational messages about how to create a life of true freedom, mastery and awaken-

ing. She is a serious seeker who has deeply immersed herself in spiritual practice and study from the age of 18 and has spent many years in residence with several of the most renowned spiritual masters of our time. Dr. De Angelis is also known for being one of the most moving and inspirational female speakers in the world. Visit her website: barbaradeangelis.com