



answers "out there." The reality is you'll always find the most important answers and deepest truths when you look within to explore the depths of your own being.

I encourage you to begin a simple practice of always asking yourself for an inner answer before you seek guidance or advice elsewhere. Just notice the answers you have for yourself before you go searching for more "clarity" from others.

=====  
3) Feature: A Thanksgiving Attitude for the Entire Year  
=====

Thanksgiving just passed and we're entering that time of year filled with holiday parties and family gatherings. Particularly this year, as the focus turns to celebration, gift-giving and good cheer, I'm increasingly aware of the day-to-day blessings that most of us take for granted.

"Look closely and you will find that people are happy because they are grateful. The opposite of gratefulness is just taking everything for granted."

-- David Steindl-Rast in The Music of Silence

One of my clients has been dealing with some very disruptive staff problems. A couple of disgruntled employees created an interpersonal battlefield in their department. Lines were drawn in the sand and staff had chosen sides, while productivity and customer service were both plummeting. Then came September 11th and I fully expected those events would help that staff gain some much needed perspective. As the rest of New York City showed a remarkable solidarity and a dramatic shift to greater kindness and patience, these employees continued their angry and bitter interactions.

Watching their ongoing conflict amazed and disturbed me for a number of reasons: 1) they were unable to step back and see their issues in a larger perspective; 2) they couldn't see the damage they were doing to themselves as well as to others on their team; 3) even something as catastrophic and world changing as 9/11 couldn't shake them from their angry perspectives; and 4) they were ignoring the enormous blessings they had in their lives and their work and choosing instead to focus on inflicting damage and blame on each other.

The interpersonal dynamics at this client highlight one of the key differences I see between people who have an internal versus an external focus when faced with problems. When the focus is primarily external, blame is doled out like it was candy, and the response is generally defensiveness and anger. Most of this angry staff is so focused on what everyone else is doing that blame is their middle name. Every problem is caused by someone else or by something that they see as out of their control. Their problems are compounded by their unwillingness to be self-reflective and look at the part they play in the situation.

When you want to have a more internal, self-responsible, and self-reflective focus, you ask yourself questions like:

- What is it about this problem that really bothers ME?
- What do I do that contributes to this problem?

· How can I change MY view, MY thinking, or MY actions to improve things?

· If I can't find a way to change things, who else can I call on to help us?

The essential question is always, "What can I do to improve the situation?" And the focus is always on self-examination and the necessary action required to move things forward.

So what does all this have to do with nurturing a Thanksgiving attitude through the entire year?

One of the surest ways to shift you from a "negative external" to "positive internal" focus is the practice of gratitude. And, it's simply a matter of noticing some of the great things that go on in your life. Whenever you think it's hard to do that, you're forgetting how simple gratitude really is. You're also choosing to focus your attention on negativity and problems, instead of intentionally noticing your blessings and allowing a feeling of gratitude to wash over you.

"Joy is the simplest form of gratitude."  
-- Karl Barth in Joy by Beverly Elaine Eanes

Gratitude requires a simple perspective shift. Instead of noticing and paying attention to problems, you shift and notice something you have to be thankful for. Events like September 11th help many of us to immediately shift into this perspective. For those other times when gratitude feels like a struggle, try some of the action tips in the next section.

Will adopting an attitude of Thanksgiving immediately solve all your problems? No. But it WILL put you in a much better position to see possibilities and discover workable solutions. You'll also feel so much better, that you might not even notice some of the "problems" that seem to be bothering everyone else!

"Gratitude is the state of mind of thankfulness. As it is cultivated, we experience an increase in our "sympathetic joy," our happiness at another's happiness. Just as in the cultivation of compassion, we may feel the pain of others, so we may begin to feel their joy as well. And it doesn't stop there."  
-- Stephen Levine in A Year to Live

Gratitude is ultimately an "inside job." It happens when you notice the blessings in your life. When you succeed at making gratitude a regular habit, you can easily enjoy Thanksgiving all year long!

=====  
4) Action Tips  
=====

Here are some things you can do when you'd like to shift into a Thanksgiving attitude:

1. Notice the little things. A sunny morning, a smile, good food, clean water, a heated home. There are hundreds of things that are good and beneficial in your life. Just notice them.

2. Don't take anything for granted. Your relationships, health, home, job, friends, family, education, and many other things are all enormous blessings that you often overlook. Just waking up in the morning can be a deeply satisfying experience if you choose to look at it from a perspective of gratitude.

3. Recognize privilege. Realize that many things you take for granted are unimaginable luxuries to many on our planet. Most of us have lived our entire lives with tremendous privilege, especially here in the United States. We forget how many people go to sleep hungry in the world. We forget that most of the global population cannot read nor write. We just forget, and in doing so we miss the opportunity to be grateful.

4. Stop comparing yourself to others. Keeping up with the Joneses is passé. There will always be someone who has it better, bigger, smarter and easier. Spend as much time as you need to figure out what's truly important to you and focus your attention on those things. If you do, you'll have a lot more success and a lot more to feel grateful for.

5. Serve Others. Go help someone who's in need. Volunteer at a soup kitchen. Visit elderly hospital patients. Plant a community garden. Anything that allows you to serve others can help you make the gratitude shift.

6. Start a Gratitude Journal. Schedule a regular time each week (or each day) to write out some of the things you are grateful for. Setting up a time to intentionally focus on, and record your gratitude can do wonders for your attitude and spirit.

=====  
5) Related Resources  
=====

ONLINE:

Spirituality & Health Magazine's list of articles about Gratitude.  
[www.spiritualityhealth.com/newsh/lists/pthp\\_article\\_15.html](http://www.spiritualityhealth.com/newsh/lists/pthp_article_15.html)

Books about Gratitude with reviews.  
[www.spiritualityhealth.com/newsh/lists/pthp\\_bookreview\\_15.html](http://www.spiritualityhealth.com/newsh/lists/pthp_bookreview_15.html)

An Online Gratitude Journal for you to use at Sarah Ban Breathnach's website.  
[www.simpleabundance.com/gratitude.html](http://www.simpleabundance.com/gratitude.html)

Light a virtual candle at this gratitude site.  
[www.gratefulness.org/practice/candles.html](http://www.gratefulness.org/practice/candles.html)

BOOKS:

Attitudes of Gratitude : How to Give and Receive Joy Everyday of Your Life by M. J. Ryan In this inspiring book, author M.J. Ryan shows readers how to nurture this attitude every day of their lives. Short, easy-to-digest essays explain why gratitude chases away negative emotions - and how gratitude is possible even in times of pain and hardship.

A large list of additional books on gratitude can be found by searching on the term "gratituede" at Amazon.com or any of the other

online bookstores.

=====  
THE INSIDE CONNECTION is a free monthly publication from Kesslin Associates designed to help you stay focused on what's most important for lasting success. Most of our readers are passionate leaders who understand that they must BE the change they want to see in the world.

Kesslin Associates is a success coaching and training company dedicated to helping you become an extraordinarily effective leader. We help you strengthen your inside connection to values, passion, vision, and soul--so you can deliver extraordinary results with far less effort. For lasting success, we also work with you to discover how you, your work, and the rest of your life can support each other, rather than cause conflict. For more information about our work, visit our website at <http://www.kesslin.com>

You can subscribe or unsubscribe at:  
<http://www.kesslin.com/resources/newsletter.html>  
PRIVACY: We never share or sell our mailing list.

We encourage you to forward this e-zine to anyone you believe would benefit and we welcome your comments and suggestions. You may copy or distribute THE INSIDE CONNECTION as long as you include the complete copyright notice and contact information below.

=====  
The Inside Connection  
ISSN: #1535-1076 Library of Congress, Washington, DC  
Copyright(c)2001 by Ken Kesslin - All rights reserved.  
<http://www.kesslin.com>  
<mailto:insideconnection@kesslin.com>  
=====