

## **GRATITUDE**

BY Pierre Zimmerman

Is the reverence we feel for things given to us, and do we realize how much we need each other to provide and secure for us things that we cannot provide for ourselves? In these days of the pandemic, which are trying times, many people are suffering physically and/or economically along with the political strife. Many have been moved to express thanks to frontline essential workers and teachers, sending messages of appreciation, making signs, and delivering food. But other forms of gratitude feel harder.

There is a way to feel and think of ways that highlight the gifts of life, but it takes some begrudging effort at times. Sometimes there is a wave of gratitude that washes over us, other times not, and we might experience remorse, because we haven't lost a job, still having a comfortable home, and don't know of anyone who died. Gratitude doesn't mean we float through life in a state of bliss.

Sometimes gratitude means taking a few minutes to check in with someone, send a thank you note or a virtual hug, bring cookies, make someone laugh. Reflecting on others gives our brain a break and a different focus that makes a difference for our happiness. These small gestures have the power to energize us and give us the fuel to get through all the moments in between. A gratitude journal helps us connect better with others, improves our sleep, and reduces stress so that we feel more optimistic and satisfied with others, and we become more resilient.

Gratitude is a powerful antidote for emotional chaos, occasional despair, depression and defeating thoughts and behavior. It can be a choice, but it is ours to make. It becomes easier over time when we practice thinking and feeling moments of grace, because it helps us to notice and absorb them, bit by bit, as they become a regular part of our life. If you can feel grateful during these times, then you will surely be able to see the good things in life.

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