

Conversations with self-11

Thanking our 'Road Changers'

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Not expressing your gratitude is like wrapping a present and not giving it

One day a young boy returned from school, sullen and upset. He went straight to his room and locked the door. At dinner time he did not come out, so his father gently knocked on his door and requested the boy to have his dinner. The boy came out of his room and crestfallen sat at the dinner table. He did not speak and kept staring at his food. His father realising that the boy must have received his report card smiled and said, "Son, whatever your grades, they will not affect my love for you. You are God's gift to me and I cherish your presence in my life. Your value to me is constant." On hearing this, the boy burst into tears and said, "I was planning to take my life after dinner as I thought you did not love me. Now I know I am valuable to you; I will work hard to do better at school; I will never attempt to take my life." When we express gratitude, the results are positive.

If someone who was important to us died abruptly, would we say, "I wish I had told him how grateful I am to him?" or if something were to happen to us suddenly, wouldn't we want those you care about to have known how much we appreciated them? That is the core issue. If your answer to the questions posed is 'yes', then wait no longer, express your gratitude. Gratitude is an opportunity to end the moment and avoid the pain.

Walter Green in his wonderful book "This is the Moment" calls all those who have crossed our lives 'Road Changers', persons to whom we need to express our gratitude.

Expressing gratitude elevates my general sense of happiness. Findings have shown that not only those who are acknowledged and appreciated feel valued, but also those bestowing the praise reap tremendous benefits.

Gratitude is also an opportunity for others to reciprocate. Feeling grateful and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.

I often hesitate to express gratitude and I rationalise it by saying the following to myself:

1. I am too young to express gratitude
2. I am too old to express gratitude
3. I do not know that many people to whom I can say thanks
4. I cannot afford to say thanks
5. It doesn't really matter whether I say thanks
6. I would be uncomfortable saying thank you
7. They would be uncomfortable if I said it to them
8. They already know how I feel about them
9. I am too busy to say thanks
10. They are too busy to receive my thanks

Such statements defeat the very purpose of saying thank you. Voltaire said: 'Appreciation is a wonderful thing. It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.'

Gratitude puts my emotional house in order. The unexpected outcome of expressing gratitude is appreciation and acknowledgement of self and that I am truly a good and well-meaning human being.

Marcel Proust says: 'Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.'

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