

# The Three Gratitude Robbers

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What would your life be like if you lived in constant state of gratitude? How can you start to notice all of the gifts you have in your life? Who could you become? Would you be happier? Healthier? Wealthier? The answer, of course, is a resounding YES!

Unfortunately, dealing with life's circumstances can rob us all of the ability to live in a state of gratefulness. What are these robbers and what can you do to reduce their power or eliminate them from your life?

The Three Gratitude Robbers are: **Entitlement**, **Dependency Issues**, and **Forgetfulness**.

When we harbor these feelings, we are not experiencing all the joy that is available to us. Don't worry, with a few simple exercises you CAN recognize and overcome these robbers and fully harness the power of gratitude. So get ready, when you use the information in this report, you will change your attitude *and* your life.

Let's look at the gratitude robbers and how we can reduce their negative effects on our lives:

## **Entitlement**

We live in a society where we are besieged with more advertising than in any other time in history. Nowadays, from the moment they are born, children are subjected to every kind of ad imaginable – from the coolest toys to the sugariest cereals. Parents, not wanting to listen to the temper tantrums, appease their children by supplying them with everything they want. Because of this, children are exposed to immediate gratification at a young age and they expect this phenomenon to continue throughout their lives.

Credit card applications flow steadily into the hands of high school and college students encouraging them to buy everything that they “need” right now. This includes the latest fashions, iPods, smart phones, and video games. Households are receiving numerous credit card applications in the mail each week, and studies have shown that the average credit card-indebted family spends 21% (1) of its income servicing that debt. We are chalking up huge amounts of credit card debt for things and we end up with nothing to show for it. We feel that

we are entitled to have whatever we want, whenever we want it. Delayed gratification is not a common practice and there are plenty of good reasons that it should be..

A landmark Stanford University study showed the value of delayed gratification and it's profound effect on children that are able to wait for what they want. In the study, children were given a marshmallow and left in a room with it for 15 minutes. They were promised that if they did not eat the marshmallow, they would received an additional marshmallow as a reward. Some of the kids ate their marshmallows right away, others waited a little while before giving into temptation and some of them waited. Ten years later, the researchers found that the children who held out for the reward had become more successful adults than the children who had devoured their marshmallows right away. (2)

If a person feels entitled to everything, he or she is thankful for nothing. Because of our entitlement mentality, we are becoming selfish, depressed, unhappy and in debt. We need to put things in the proper perspective. Not everything is going to go our way, but it is guaranteed that if you look, you can find something to be grateful for in every situation. Remember, there is nothing that we are entitled to. No one owes us a job, a living or love. Everything we have is because of the choices we make and the people that are in our lives.

Let's make it a point to appreciate everything in our lives – large and small – and realize that it's by grace alone that we have what we have, and we need to start finding joy in the small things instead of holding out for big achievements. Our paths may take some twists and turns before we get our long anticipated promotion, or we find our soul mate, or we have a child. Enjoy the journey and allow yourself to have the experience of gratitude and joy.

So, how can we get out of the entitlement mode? The key is gratitude. We need to get out of the habit of taking for granted all of the good that is in our lives.

**EXERCISE:** Honestly consider and then make a list of the things that you may be taking for granted – your home, your health, your spouse or children, your job, etc. Now, imagine a worst-case scenario, where each of these items are taken away from you one by one. Really get into the feeling of it. What would it be like if tomorrow you

were told you had to give up your home and you had no place to live? What if you lost one of your limbs in an accident? How would you cope? How would you feel? What if you found out that you only had 6 months to live. What would you do differently?

After you have thoroughly contemplated the very worst scenario that you can, imagine what it would be like to be given the opportunity to win back your house. How would you feel if you could have your limb back? What if you found out that the test was in error and you had a long life ahead of you. Again, get into that feeling. How grateful would you be?

Journal how you feel. Experience it, live it. As you get into the habit of keeping a gratitude journal, your life will begin to change.

## **Dependency Issues**

When a person is a recipient of charity, they may perceive it to be a form of social control. They may feel that accepting the gift puts them in a position of inferiority or they question the giver's generosity. Because they see the giver as someone that has power, prestige or money, they don't know how they could ever repay the kindness and they make up excuses about the occurrence so they don't have to feel guilty or dependent on someone else.

We wish to be perceived as strong, independent, and self-sufficient. When someone extends to us a kindness, service or gift that we did not ask for and were not expecting, sometimes we just don't want to feel a sense of obligation to that person. We want credit for what we've done and we don't necessarily want to share the limelight. When we acknowledge that others were involved in our success, we may feel that we are diminishing our own efforts.

When we begin to realize a sense of interdependence with the rest of the world, we can appreciate more of what we have as well as the people that helped to make it all happen. John Donne once said, "No man is an island" and it's a statement worth considering. We need each other – and when we are grateful, we attract even more blessings into our life.

**EXERCISE:** Write down 3-5 material blessings that you have in your life. Now, make a list of all the people that were involved in the process of your receiving them. An example might be the beautiful couch you just purchased. Think about the lumberjacks that had to cut the trees down for the wooden legs, the sawmill that cut the wood, the artisans that designed it. You have the people who picked the cotton to make the fabric, the shipping company that transported the couch, the sales associate that waited on you, etc. Even though you used your annual bonus at work to purchase that magnificent piece of furniture, there were plenty of individuals involved who made it happen. Do this exercise on a regular basis, picking out random events, people, products and circumstances. Make it a contest to see how many people you can get on the list. Try to get one or two more on each subsequent list.

## **Forgetfulness**

We live in an ADD/ADHD society, with an average attention span of about 20 minutes (3). Our full time jobs take up a large portion of our week and smart phones and Blackberries put us at the beck and call of anyone that wants to reach us. Television, video games and the internet are sucking the very life out of us, and we are simply too busy to remember to express gratitude for all the good we receive.

When we neglect the opportunity to express appreciation for the people, circumstances and events in our lives, we are failing to take advantage of one of the true joys of life. People are starved for recognition and appreciation. A smile, a kind word or a considerate gesture can mean a lot. We have no idea the impact we we can have on the lives of others. Not only do people like to feel appreciated, it feels good to appreciate.

Yes, expressing gratitude takes time. However, isn't it better to let the people in our lives know that we appreciate them while we still can tell them? None of us know when our time or our loved one's time on this planet is up. Think about what happens when someone dies. We spend so much time crafting the perfect eulogy for our loved one, and yet what kind of difference can we make if we told those same words of gratitude to them while they are still here to appreciate it. When we tell someone we appreciate them, we created a memory,

when we write them a note or letter, we create a treasure. .

**EXERCISE:** Schedule time for gratitude. Make an appointment with yourself to take the time, whatever works in your schedule, just clear the time and do it. During your gratitude time, ask yourself the question, “Who needs to hear from me today?” Someone will pop into your mind. Take a few minutes and think about that person. What makes them special? What do you most appreciate about them. Write them a note or letter, expressing your appreciation to them. Let them know how you feel. Do this and you will create a treasure for that person for many years to come..

### **The Gift of Appreciation**

When it comes to gratitude, feeling a sense of entitlement, not wanting to feel dependent on others, and forgetting to say “Thank You” costs us in every area of our lives. A daily practice of gratitude, using any of the above strategies, will make a difference. It only works if you work it, so here's your challenge – for the next 30 days spend 5-10 minutes a day doing one of the above exercises. Choose your favorite or mix and match. It's up to you. Choose gratitude.

Thanks for reading, I appreciate you!

#### References:

- (1) <http://www.creditcards.com/credit-card-news/credit-card-industry-facts-personal-debt-statistics-1276.php#Debt-as-pct.-of-income>
- (2) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanford\\_marshmallow\\_experiment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanford_marshmallow_experiment)
- (3) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attention\\_span](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attention_span)