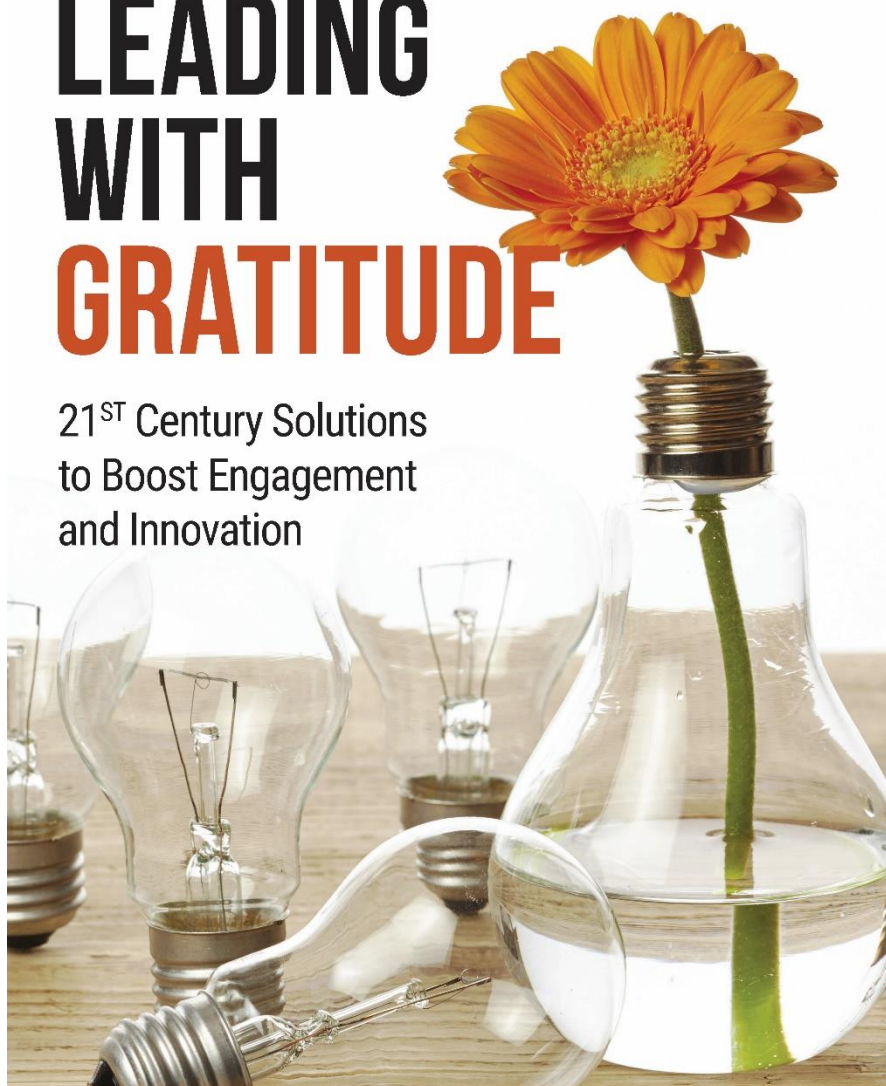
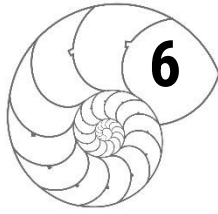


LEADING WITH GRATITUDE

21ST Century Solutions
to Boost Engagement
and Innovation



STAR SARGENT DARGIN



Mindfulness, Optimism, Happiness, and Thank You

“Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues but the parent of all the others.” Cicero

Mindfulness or Gratitude?

“The faculty of bringing back a wandering attention over and over again is the very root of judgment, character, and will.” William James

Gratitude is closely related and has many cousins, such as happiness, optimism, reciprocity, trust, and mindfulness. Like all cousins, they share DNA with similarities and differences. They all operate in the same part of the brain and can only exist when we are not in survival mode. Reciprocity can also work in both the survival and positive side of the brain, depending on the intention. All of the cousins are learnable skills and muscles that can be strengthened. All are complimentary and something to consider adding to your gratitude plan and practice. All can be self-managed, and the more they are practiced, the easier they are to manage. Gratitude and mindfulness are more closely related than the others. They are frequently called paths, gateways, or tools for building each other. They are all subjective and, therefore, challenging to define, research, measure, teach, and learn. What might make one person happy, for example, a long, deliberate, detailed, fair, and comprehensive review of a new product, will drive the person up the wall who only wants the high-level benefits. These cousins vary in how deeply and often individuals experience them along a spectrum.

- Sadness → happiness
- Not-trusting → trust
- Pessimism → optimism

These states of being can be measured along the spectrum for individuals, teams, organizations, and situations and can vary from minute to minute.

Mindfulness and gratitude are underlying states of being that promote the other cousins of happiness, trust, and optimism. Mindfulness and gratitude are related but not the same. It is like asking: Which comes first, the chicken or the egg? Mindfulness or gratitude? Mindfulness and gratitude egg each other on and support each other.

Mindfulness has many definitions. It can be defined as being awake to what is right now, focused on now, not worrying about the past, and not planning what you need to do next. Jon Kabat-Zinn, the founder of a widespread meditation practice, MBSR (Mindful Based Stress Reduction), defines mindfulness as “The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of the experience.”

The irony of the definition and name is not to keep your mind “full” but rather to empty it of any thoughts that pull you into the past or the future. To keep yourself aware and focused on the current situation. There are many ways to be mindful. Meditation is the predominant method and most associated with mindfulness. Meditation does retrain and strengthens attention. Being hypnotized or using self-hypnosis can also bring a state of mindfulness. Walking and movement can also bring about mindfulness. Living in a fast-paced environment with no time for anything, too much to do, and multitasking, the stress-filled business world screams for us to find a way to bring about being mindful quickly so that we can reduce stress, increase energy and focus attention on what matters.

In the short term, just ten minutes of mindfulness overcame the damage to concentration from multitasking; only eight minutes of mindfulness lessened mind wandering for a while. Lasting benefits require an ongoing practice of some form of mediation. For many people, a few deep, grounding breaths will bring a sense of mindfulness. It is not a natural state for most adults, and it can be learned, like gratitude. Babies are born mindful; as we age and grow, we become less cognizant due to socialization. Retaining our born mindfulness and raising mindful children is gaining popularity.

More and more schools are introducing mindfulness into the classroom. There are many benefits, and studies find that children are more focused and less confrontational. Terri, a friend of mine, teaches children how to be mindful. She asks them to concentrate on their rhythmical breathing to stay focused in the present moment while following the movement of a toy called a Hoberman Sphere (an expanding and contracting, colorful sphere).

Mindfulness has become an accepted and strategic tool to improve leadership effectiveness and employee health in businesses. Meditation centers and mindful practices are popping up in many workplaces. Google, to mention only one company, offers mindfulness training to all its employees, and now through its institute, Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute (SIYLI), to the world community.

An executive coach and organizational development consultant, Gabriele has studied and practiced meditation and mindfulness for over 20 years. She reports that over the past five years, more and more corporate coaching clients have requested mindfulness to improve their effectiveness and well-being as leaders. Gabriele also leads drop-in meditation sessions for staff at a prestigious New England hospital.

Ten years ago, Gabriele decided to add interfaith ministry training to her skillset. She tells me she deals with complex organizational relationships in a world filled with increasing disturbances, distractions, and ever-growing uncertainties. Her clients increasingly draw on mediation, centering practices, and guidance around leadership spirit questions. Questions like “How do I stay inspirational and positive when I no longer see the fruits of my actions or belief in the strategy?” are questions senior executives bring to the table as they face relentless change, reorganizations, and volatility in strategic focus. Gabriele aspires to be and create “Islands of peace and sanity” in serving those business leaders and individuals seeking to be and remain centers of calm, clarity, and creativity while living with uncertainty. Mediation, mindfulness, and centering practices are a core part of her business.

For some people being mindful is not easy, meditation is difficult, and mindfulness is intimidating. It is a loaded word with associations with other people’s religions. Not all organizations and people are open to mindfulness and meditation practices. Asking a question like, “What am I grateful for?” can pull a person into being mindful. Gratitude is generally easier to do, accept and creates less resistance. Gratitude is a generic and less associated, loaded word. Gratitude can be done with eyes open in the

here and now. Gratitude can prompt action, but mindfulness alone does not. There is a movement linking mindfulness with action. Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese monk, calls it engaged Buddhism. He says that action coming from the place of mindfulness is compassion. He strongly advocates it and says, "Mindfulness must be engaged.... We must take action once we see that something needs to be done. Seeing and action go together. Otherwise, what is the point of seeing?"

Mindfulness is just being. Many mindfulness meditations encourage and say to swat away thoughts and should, could, must do now thoughts. Gratitude is an underlying state of being that creates positive, creative, and innovative actions, solutions, and results. Ironically, when we can become mindful, we become grateful. When we are grateful, we become mindful. Those who are regular practitioners of meditation and mindfulness say that, as a result, gratitude sneaks in. It is like the chicken and the egg. Either can come first. In many experts' opinions, it does not matter which comes first; start and get there.

Mindfulness and Gratitude

Mindfulness is a skill that can be learned. Being mindful in business promotes calmness, peace, and clear, nonjudgmental focus. It improves the ability to make better and more holistic choices because we are not in survival lockdown mode. Managers frequently are required to have juggling skills. They interact with many diverse functions and work at producing different levels of outcomes. Being mindful allows nonjudgmental observation without assigning any immediate subjective assessment. The situation is not defined as good, bad, hard, or easy: it is what it is.

Mindfulness allows the objective observation of one's own emotions and senses. It will enable the flexibility to enter a problem-solving mode and choose among the best actions rather than being stuck in reflexive mental habits or emotions. This is not to say that cultivating mindfulness suggests that emotions and feelings be denied, repressed, or ignored. Instead, observe them at that moment of decision and allow action from less constrained, more expanded choices to proceed first. It is similar to being in an emergency and being able to choose to do lifesaving actions now and deal later with the event's emotional impact. Mindfulness in that moment of choice expands the possibilities of action.

There are many ways to learn to be more mindful, and individuals can benefit greatly by finding out what works for them. Gratitude combined with mindfulness adds that dimension of appreciation for the other person or situation, caring, and empathy. Mindfulness sets up gratitude. It is a tool for being grateful. Whereas a gratitude practice in the workplace directly impacts the actions of individuals, teams, and organizations.

Happiness

"I believe that the very purpose of our existence is to seek happiness," says the Dalai Lama. Whether you are religious or not, life moves forward, and happiness is important. Life is good, the good life and a pleasant life. Happiness is a right and a belief that is firmly implanted in our culture. Even the US Constitution mentions it as a right, "the pursuit of happiness."

"Happiness is the new ROI," says Shawn Riegsecker, CEO of Centro, in a September 2015 *Forbes* interview. The company was ranked as the number one best place to work among all midsize American

companies by *Fortune*. Centro's philosophy of happiness has resulted in one of the highest rankings on Glassdoor.com. Glassdoor has the largest database of millions of reviews of companies derived from employees past and present. Its database has over 700,000 companies and 41 million unique visitors a month. It is known as the source to get authentic information on a company, not just what an organization says about itself, but the real deal. Shawn has created a manifesto governing Centro, which includes the happiness of the individual's growth and well-being. It also calls for everyone to be responsible for their improvements, company, and community. The manifesto includes being grateful for opportunities. It is a very positive and appealing manifesto for many, particularly the millennials.

The pursuit of happiness has become pervasive in personal and professional life, as reflected in today's culture. Some say it is a backlash from the short-term focus on the bottom-line corporate goal of profits and earnings promoting this movement. I predict that happiness as a value in a decade or so will become part of the new mainstream in business and our personal lives.

"Ninety percent of our happiness comes from and can be predicted by the way our brain processes the external world," says Harvard University Psychologist Shawn Achor, the CEO of Good Think Inc., where he researches and teaches about positive psychology. According to Shawn, happiness is a feeling and emotion pervasive worldwide. He talks about the happiness advantage: When we are happy at work, productivity increases by 31 percent. Employees perform more intelligently, are more creative, and successfully achieve their goals.

When people are motivated, they are happy. Organizations have long used the carrot-and-stick approach to motivation. Pay more and give rewards (the carrot) to motivate, pay less, and remove rewards for poor performance (the stick). Daniel Pink's book *Drive* suggests that the carrot and stick still work for repetitive work. However, to be motivated, non-repetitive work must come from an internal desire. Meaningful work makes people happy. Meaningful work, he says, allows the person to be autonomous, working towards mastery, and is tied into a larger purpose or goal (hopefully of the organization). When employees are motivated, they are happy.

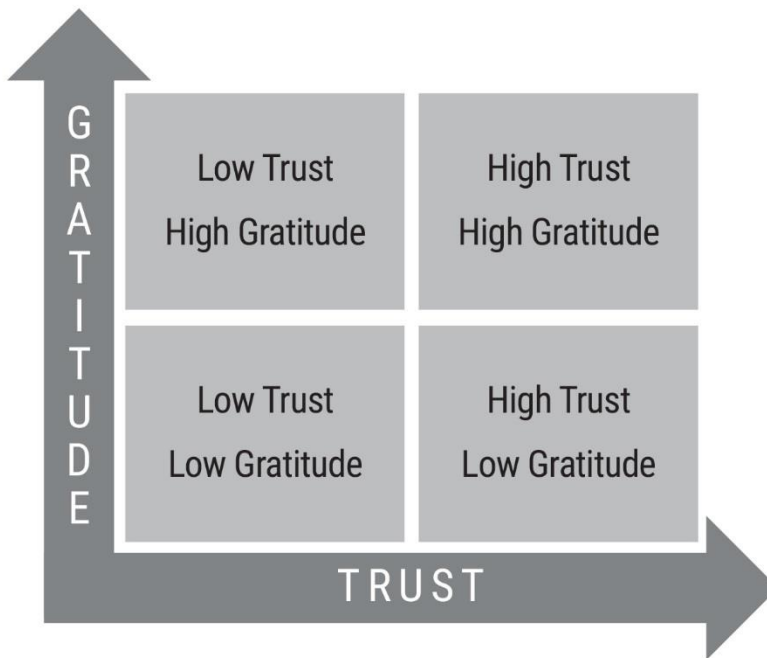
In a July 15, 2011, *Forbes* interview, "I don't have to chase extraordinary moments to find happiness; it is right in front of me if I am paying attention and practicing gratitude," said Brené Brown. She found in her research that the relationship between joy (happiness) and gratitude was one of the most important discoveries. Everyone she interviewed who described themselves as joyous or joyful has a conscious practice of gratitude. A practice of gratitude leads to more joy. Gratitude is the key to creating happiness, according to Brené and many other experts: the more gratitude, the more happiness experienced.

Trust and Gratitude

In the leadership section, we highlighted two models where the core is based on trust: Covey's *The Speed of Trust* and Lencioni's *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. We also showed trust as something measurable in the brain and similar to gratitude. Like gratitude, trust is only available when not in survival mode. Gratitude and trust have a relationship. There are many hypotheses from the scientific and spiritual communities about what that means. The premise used for several studies is that gratitude enhances trust. In one study, a gratitude intervention was done for one group before strangers were to play a game together. In the gratitude intervention group, meaningful trust behaviors were exhibited,

resulting in a trust boost of 17.5 percent, which translated to the gratitude intervention group trusting each other more. Their greater trust led them to take more risks, like spending more money. In all cases, they were strangers. The gratitude-induced group had a higher trust, and they always won. Figure 5 illustrates the relationship between gratitude and trust.

Figure 1. Efficient and Effective (Speed and Quality) Work



Try this experiment to determine the relationship between trust and gratitude.

We do This exercise in workshops to test an individual's responses and impact to trust and gratitude.

How might this work for you?

First, think of a person you trust the least at work. They ask you to do something; what is your response? Typical responses are to ignore the request, research it, and put it at the bottom of your to-do list.

Second, imagine a person you do not trust but are grateful for, the person or the work they do. Would it change your immediate response?

Alternatively, think of the person you trust most at work who asks you to do something that is not that appealing or outside your regular job. What would your response be? Typical answers are to do it, do it well in a quality way, and do it fast.

Now add gratitude to the mix; think of a person and situation you are grateful for and trust who asks you to do something—does it change how you respond to the request? In most cases having trust and being grateful get the highest quality and fastest turnaround on the request, regardless of what it is.

In my sample of over 100 workshops I've run, I would conclude that gratitude significantly boosts productivity when we trust the person and don't know them. Gratitude only slightly enhances results when we already trust the person. Gratitude builds and strengthens trust.

Gratitude Is Not Optimism

“I didn’t see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me.” Steve Jobs, 2005

Optimism is having a positive mindset about the future. Optimistic people react positively and confidently when faced with problems. Consider this situation and the two different responses. The project that you are on is considered a failure. Which of these two would you be more likely to think:

“I’m such a failure; I can’t do anything right.”

Or

“It was just a project; I will do better next time; I can do other projects well.”

These responses are on opposite ends of the optimism and pessimism spectrum. The pessimistic response (the first one) makes it personal, an internal failure. Personal failures sound like this; I cannot do this; a pervasive failure, I am always wrong, and I can never do it right. The optimist response (second one) is not personal. They are external failures; I can do this under these different circumstances, a limited failure. It is just one project: “I’ll do better next time.”

Extensive research on optimism shows many physical and mental benefits. Optimistic people take more risks; they believe failures are limited and there will eventually be a positive outcome. Optimistic people anticipate more because the future looks positive, so they try harder and practice more. Optimism has a downside. There is something called the *optimist bias*, as described by researcher Tali Sharot in her TED talk. Optimist bias is something I struggle with. It is a belief that things will always work out, the customers will buy more, and you will get that promotion. When you believe those things, you are less likely to put real actionable plans in place. Plans like, for example, how to get customers to buy more or what you need to do to get a promotion. The more optimistic you are, the less likely you are to accept negative realities, which also means taking on riskier behavior and poor planning because it will all be okay. It is like seeing the world through rose-colored glasses that turn off negative realities. Overcoming the optimistic bias requires looking at the real or perceived negatives and doing something about it, not just waiting for the positive outcome. There are many examples in my personal life where the Optimist Bias has caused problems. I have stayed in a personal and professional relationship longer than I should have, always believing it would improve, but they never did.

James Stockdale’s story of being a tortured prisoner highlights how gratitude can co-exist with a horrendous event. He saw reality clearly compared to his fellow prisoners, who were optimistic and did not survive. In 1965, Stockdale was a Navy commander during the Vietnam War and had to eject from his plane. He was taken as a prisoner and repeatedly tortured. His story is documented in Jim Collins’s book *Good to Great*. Jim Collins labeled this the Stockdale Paradox. The Stockdale Paradox holds two seemingly opposite views to be true: having the ability to have faith that it will work out and confronting the brutal facts of your current reality.

After James was rescued, he said this about his experience, “I would prevail in the end and turn the experience into the defining event of my life, which, in retrospect, I would not trade.”

Robert was asked who did not survive, “Oh, that’s easy, the optimists. Oh, they were the ones who said, ‘We’re going to be out by Christmas.’ And Christmas would come, and Christmas would go. Then they’d say, ‘We’ll be out by Easter.’ And Easter would come, and Easter would go. And then Thanksgiving, and then it would be Christmas again. And they died of a broken heart.”

He summed up what Jim Collins calls the Stockdale Paradox this way, “This is a vital lesson. You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end—which you can never afford to lose—with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.” Stockdale calls it faith when you can see the world's reality (good or bad) and not unthinkingly believe it will be okay and everything will work out. Figure 6 shows how gratitude and optimism could have played out in this case.

Gratitude versus Optimism: Prisoners’ Situation		
Thought	Gratitude Response	Optimism Response
I’m alive.	Grateful for life	Of course, I am.
I’ve lost my freedom.	Plan for freedom	I’ll be out by Easter.
My jailors are cruel.	Manage my behaviors, and learn theirs	They’ll change.

Figure 2. Analysis of Gratitude Versus Prisoners’ Optimism

Figure 3 shows how gratitude, optimism, and pessimism could play out when an employee makes an error. The impact of each is shown in Figure 3.

Gratitude versus Optimism: Work Related I made an Error			
Thought	Gratitude	Optimism	Pessimist
I made an Error.	I can learn from it and improve.	It won’t Happen again.	My fault; I’m stupid.
I have a job.	I will plan to improve.	That’s great. Do nothing.	It’s a lousy job.

Figure 3. Analysis of Gratitude Versus Optimism for Work Error

Gratitude Impact: Accepts responsibly, learns from error, plans to do something different, and makes different results possible.

Optimistic Impact: Accepts responsibility, hopes it will improve, does not dig into the error, and gets the same results next time.

Pessimistic Impact: Does not accept full responsibility, less engaged, not improving, blames others, and keeps doing the same thing the same way.

It is incredible how simple thoughts can impact and potentially change the outcome of a situation. These are the extreme cases on the end of their spectrum. The reality is that all those thoughts may happen in relation to the same situation. Typically, someone would start with, "Not my fault," then, "It won't happen again," and finally, "I can learn from it."

Gratitude being an underlying attribute, can be combined with optimism or pessimism. People can be grateful optimist or a grateful pessimist. I call myself a realistic optimist, a more familiar phrase than the same thing, a grateful optimist. The key is which predominate approach they will use to resolve the situation to move forward. How fast can someone shift to a gratitude approach?

Gratitude and mindfulness are ways of being and closely related cousins. They are underlying states of being. Gratitude is a tool and a way to build the skills of happiness and optimism. Gratitude can be delayed, like in the case of James Stockdale.

A practice of gratitude and feelings of gratitude can create happiness, optimism, hope, and possibilities. False hope, the Optimism Bias is a downside of extreme optimism. Gratitude allows both horrible realities and positivity to coexist. When using an approach of gratitude as an underlying base, you do not step over or ignore or deny facts.

No matter how abysmal they might be. Optimism can step over facts. Gratitude demands that you accept the present reality as it is now. Mindfulness puts you in touch with the current reality. Gratitude is not optimism nor happiness, yet they all exist on the same side of the brain. Gratitude is a tool that can create happiness, trust, and optimism.

Reciprocity Is Not Gratitude

"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity... It turns problems into gifts, failures into success, the unexpected into perfect timing, and mistakes into important events. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow." Melody Beattie

Gratitude and reciprocity have been around since people existed. Gratitude is a basic virtue and is sometimes called a cultural lubricant. That cycle of giving keeps society going. Bartering is reciprocity. Payment in exchange for a product or service is reciprocity. Intuitively and formally, cultures, religions, and people have been practicing it. There are rituals and traditions based on gratitude. Thanksgiving is an example of a cultural manifestation of gratitude.

There is a clear difference between reciprocity and gratitude, even though they are close cousins. If you receive payment for a job, you feel obligated to reciprocate and do the work; that is reciprocity. Give and take. Stores always use reciprocity; they offer discounts and free items and assist you so that you

will, in turn, feel obligated to purchase. It is human nature that if you feel obligated, there is a desire and need to reciprocate. If you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. Home-based direct marketing has at its core the appeal for reciprocity. If I invite you to my house and feed you, you will feel obligated to order products like jewelry, pocketbooks, or Tupperware. Sometimes it is unclear if a favor is returned because of gratitude or reciprocity or the physiological need to return it.

We know from research that this need for reciprocity that humans have is wired into our DNA. It can be manipulated to get people to do what they want. Advertisers and marketers have been known and taught how to manipulate reciprocity for their gain. Advertisers count on a 30-second Super Bowl commercial costing them about 5 million to make you feel so good that you will unconsciously return the obligation of feeling good and purchase their product. Robert Cialdini, who wrote *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, is considered one of the most important books on influencing. He combines science with practical advice on influencing others, and reciprocity is a critical influencing approach.

Reciprocity is a cousin of gratitude that can be used positively or negatively to influence. After reading the book several times and trying out reciprocity, I was shocked at how easy it is to influence (or manipulate) others. My eyes were opened wide, and I became skeptical. I could see so many intentional or conscious uses of reciprocity. It was clear that retail stores did it by giving away free products or services if you bought something. As project managers, we learned that offering free food in exchange for attending our meeting helped to get people there. Food for attendance at a meeting is a form of reciprocity. Learning about reciprocity and the art and science of it helped to temper my optimism bias and see interactions in a whole new light. Building my gratitude muscle kept the skepticism at bay.

Reciprocity is one of the cores of influencing. Reciprocity can be used to get something, influence another person's thinking, or gain an advantage. People have gratitude, but do animals? It is not clear from research whether animals have gratitude or symmetry-based reciprocity. If you do something nice for your dog, he will be grateful and be nice back to you. The dog may only follow the adage, "If you scratch my back, then I'll scratch yours." Here are some other sayings that capture reciprocity's need for balancing and keeping us obligation free:

- Quid pro quo
- Share and share alike
- Tit for tat
- A favor for a favor
- One good turn deserves another
- Treat others as you would treat yourself
- The more you give, the more you receive

Napoleon Hill, of the classic *Think and Grow Rich*, says of reciprocity that it is "a universal law of the marketplace, which Nature herself will reckon if it is bent/broken long enough!"

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: "In the order of nature, we cannot render benefits to those from whom we receive them, or only seldom. But the benefit we receive must be rendered again, line for line, deed for deed, cent for cent, to somebody."

Emerson and Hill can rest easy today, knowing that brain science can prove what they made famous. The need for reciprocity is real and wired into human nature. Sometimes reciprocity is not gratitude.

Three Meanings for Thank You

Thanking someone by saying “Thank you” can have several different meanings. I have identified three levels of thank you for the general US culture. The three levels are reciprocity, politeness, and gratitude. “Thank you for a job well done” can be delivered at these three levels.

- 1. Thank you: Polite, Socially/Culturally Accepted.** This is an automatic and unconscious response based on the culture. Thank you is a habit repeated as often as 50 times a day. It can be a signal that a transaction is completed. Thank you can be a seemingly polite technique to avoid further conversation. It is how I end telemarketers’ phone calls by sharply saying thank you and hanging up the phone. Thank you for stopping by, thank you for shopping here, thank you for a job well done. Children are taught early to say thank you for gifts received even if they do not like it! It is a habit and overdone in some cultures like the United States and Japan. In other cultures, like India and Germany, it is inappropriate to thank someone for doing what is their responsibility. In the USA, a highly thanking culture, ironically, we are much less inclined to thank those we work with than those in our personal lives. Only 10 percent thank someone at work daily instead of 40 percent saying thank you personally.
- 2. Thank you: Reciprocity.** Giving something with the expectation or hope that something will be given in return. Organizational currencies are a convention for getting things in organizations. What do you have that someone else wants? Recognition, rewards, skill building, social, or moral support? If you need better help from an IT department and they need access to a person you know, it is a form of trading organizational currencies. Project Managers with team members who do not work for them know that a secret to influencing without authority and getting team members to meetings is food. This is a form of reciprocity; I’ll feed you if you attend.
- 3. Thank you: Gratitude**—an expression of feelings of appreciation. No agenda. No intent to receive something in return. It is a feeling of positivity and goodwill. The more you give from a place of genuine, authentic gratitude, the more feelings of positivity are returned to you. The opposite of giving is receiving and learning to receive without strings attached, without reciprocity. Gratitude is also being able to receive without the obligation to reciprocate graciously. There is such a thing as a free lunch.

Giving something without any expectation of anything in return is gratitude. Ironically even when something is given in gratitude, there usually will be an unexpected return. If you go above and beyond in your job, I will be grateful and give you more money, responsibility, perks, and bonuses. In turn, it can motivate you to do more. Gratitude can create a positive cycle of giving. Reciprocity can make a positive

or negative cycle of obligation. A simple example: a manager was given access to a monthly proprietary company report that typically only executives can see. The manager, feeling obligated, always read it and thanked the executive who forwarded it to him. Reading it took about three hours a month of the manager's already overbooked time. The manager always thanked the executive for the privilege of seeing the report, which prompted the executive to keep sending the report. The report added nothing to the manager's job or future career. They were locked in a cycle of reciprocity that had become burdensome to the manager. When the manager stopped thanking the executive for the report, the executive stopped sending it.

What level are most of your thank-yous, and how can you differentiate between these three levels when someone appreciates you? It is sometimes difficult and will be colored by how you perceive the person appreciating you. If you have an excellent relationship with your manager and she thanks you for a job well done, you may immediately believe it is given from the point of gratitude. However, another person may have a terrible relationship with the same manager and, when they receive the thank-you, may believe they are only being thanked because the manager wants something from them or is being polite.

When the CEO sends an email to the entire company thanking your team, what type of thank you do you think it is? Social, reciprocity, or gratitude? What is your feeling and attitude toward the CEO? It may be gratitude if you respect them as a grateful person. If your team members had a bad interaction and are skeptical of the CEO's motives, they may believe the thank you is motivated to get more work from them, reciprocity. Other team members may not have any thoughts or feelings, so the words in the email read more like a social obligation thank you. The same email can result in three different interpretations.

Since I was little, saying "thank you" and "please" was polite, required, and ingrained. It is what nice people do, a culturally expected behavior. Later, as life beat me down, I saw a harsher reality where politeness and thank you were used to get something, reciprocity. It was not until later, when I saw horrific, harmful, hurtful deeds in the world and the hope and resilience that emerged, that I genuinely understood gratitude. I learned how to appreciate and say thank you from the heart without expecting to return; that is gratitude. I moved through the three levels of thank you as I matured. Being socially trained to say thank you, learning and seeing thank you for getting something, and finally embracing thank you as gratitude.

Takeaways

Gratitude has many cousins: mindfulness, optimism, joy, reciprocity, and trust. Each cousin has a role different from gratitude but can lead to or support gratitude. While gratitude, as a foundation, can keep the negative aspects of these cousins, such as Optimism Bias and manipulative influence, in check. Here are some of the key takeaways from this chapter:

- Gratitude and mindfulness are similar but different, and they support each other.
- Typically, mindfulness is not action-oriented. Gratitude can be action-oriented.
- Authentic gratitude accepts the present reality now and does not step over facts, positive or negative. Gratitude and optimism are closely related and can have vastly different impacts and outcomes.
- There are three levels of thank you: social, reciprocity, and gratitude (authentic). Thank you used from a place of authentic gratitude doesn't expect anything in return.

External Reflection and Discussion

1. What words or phrases do you, your team, or your organization use, like gratitude, appreciation, rewards, and grace? And how are they used?
2. What is the relationship between those words and phrases and gratitude?
3. Give some examples of organizational currency, a reciprocity that works and does not?

Internal Reflection and Discussion

1. In one day, examine your use of “thank you” and how you show appreciation for others; what level are you showing appreciation at social, reciprocity, or gratitude?
2. Whom do you trust and not trust, and why? For those that you do not trust, is there anything you are grateful about them for?
3. What is your relationship between gratitude and trust, optimism, and happiness? Where would you rate yourself on the spectrum of each?
 - Sadness, happiness,
 - Not trusting → Trust
 - Pessimism → optimism