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APPRECIATION IS NEVER WASTED

By Rhoberta Shaler

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"Thank you." So good to hear. So simple to say. So, why are so many folks longing to hear it?

There is little that goes further towards improving relationships than a genuine "Thank you." You know that. Why, then, do so many folks have difficulty with it?

Are we moving too quickly to notice what others do for us? Do we just expect so much that we fail to acknowledge the little things? Is there some small part of us that refuses to give what we're not getting?

You have probably heard "It's part of your/his/her job. It's your responsibility. " Sure, it may be. Does that mean that it does not deserve acknowledgment? You can bet it would be acknowledged if it was not done!

At home, we often take each other for granted. We 'expect'. We say things like, "If you really loved me, you would _____." Those are expectations delivered in a bartering mode. Where is the appreciation for what they do? Do you expect that the garbage will go out or the dishes will be put away? Why? Because it's their job? How about saying "Thank you"? Everyone likes recognition for the things they do. It's a very easy habit to acquire.

Ever lived with teenagers? The easiest way to engage them is to catch them doing something right. That means saying "Thank you" when they do it, too. If you think this is too easy, try it for

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a month. Tell them what you see that you like, what you like about what they are doing/wearing thinking. Forget about adding anything about what you don't like. You'll see the relationship change positively. Still sound too easy? Try it!

Simply look and you'll find many things each day worthy of acknowledgment. Stop and appreciate what IS being done for you...and, say so.

William James, the great American psychologist, said, "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated." Is there a part of you that longs to be seen,

recognized and acknowledged? Every person feels better when they are appreciated.

Let's not be too busy, or too important, to stop, see, and acknowledge the contributions of others. And, once is not enough. Each time the garbage is taken out or the report is handed in, each time they bring you coffee or extend themselves on your behalf, say 'Thank you'.

There is another side to appreciation. It is equally as important as recognition. William James calls it wisdom. He says, "The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook." Ah! That's worth thinking about, isn't it?

Do you know what to overlook and when to overlook it? That can only happen when you step outside of yourself, your needs and wants, and see another person wholly. When you can calibrate what is most important at any given moment in a relationship, you are very wise.

Often, when I am working with workplace teams, conflict is worst when folks do not know what to overlook. When tempers flare and approaches differ, nitpicking escalates. When deadlines loom and funding fails, fingers point. A wise person takes a step back and looks at the whole picture. What is happening here? What do we want to happen? What outcomes do we want this exchange to create? This is the time to focus on appreciation and follow it with team problem-solving.

The same is true in all relationships. If things are getting tense, reflect on the last time you felt appreciated. More importantly, when was the last time you found something to

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appreciate in another? This could well be at the bottom of the anger, frustration, fear or hurt that you are feeling. You can fix this with good communication and assertion skills.

Start with yourself. Give first. Demanding to receive when the other person is feeling empty will only escalate the negatives. Whoever is most sane at the moment in any relationship is the one responsible for that relationship. Let that be you.

Appreciation is never wasted. Find things to acknowledge. Notice what others do well. Catch them doing things right. Notice what others do for you. Offer your thanks. You'll feel better. And, very soon, it will come back to you. I promise.

Rhobera Shaler, PhD Keynotes, Seminars & Coaching for entrepreneurs & professionals who want the

motivation & strategies to achieve, to lead and to live richly. Creator of the Living Richly™ Program
Host of Living Richly™ on www.wsRadio.ws. Author of OPTIMIZE Your Day! Practical Wisdom for Optimal Living Optimize Life Now! San Diego, CA www.OptimizeLifeNow.com

The Difference Between Approval and Appreciation

By Margaret Paul, Ph.D.

The Difference Between Approval and Appreciation

by: **Margaret Paul, Ph.D.**

Having worked with individuals, couples, families and business partners for 35 years, helping them learn to resolve conflict, I have often been faced with the difficulties that occur when people are confused about the difference between approval with appreciation. Have you ever wondered about the difference between approval and appreciation? Most of us have never actually thought about it, yet if we do think about it, we realize that we feel very differently when we receive approval as opposed to receiving appreciation. There are good reasons for this.

Approval is something we give from a wounded, controlling part of us. Approval is conditional upon the other person performing in the way we want or expect. Approval is manipulative – that is, we give it with an outcome in mind. We hope that the other person will continue to do what we want as a result of the approval.

Appreciation, on the other hand, is something we offer from a whole loving place within – what I call the loving Adult. It comes from the heart and is offered spontaneously as the heart wells up with feelings of delight, awe, joy, or love regarding another's way of being. Appreciation has much more to do with the essence of a person rather than with performance. We are appreciating a person's core Self, who they really are and the results of who they are, rather than what they do and their performance. With

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appreciation, there is no attachment to the outcome, no expectation that the other should or will continue to perform. Appreciation is a true gift.

Often, when someone says they want appreciation or do not feel appreciated, what they are really seeking is approval. It is the wounded part of them who is not feeling seen and appreciated within – they are not seeing and appreciating themselves so they need it from others to feel worthy. The wounded self of the individual projects outward the inner need to be seen, understood and appreciated and pulls from others to get this need met. Whenever I hear someone say that they do not feel appreciated, I know that their essence – their Inner Child – is not being seen and loved by their own inner adult.

When we are giving ourselves the attention and appreciation that we need and we then receive appreciation from others, it feels wonderful but it is the icing on the cake, not the cake itself. When it becomes the cake itself, then we need to look within and recognize that we have handed over to others the job of defining and validating our own worth and lovability.

When you share something about yourself with the intent of getting approval, attention or appreciation, it doesn't feel like sharing to other people. Instead they feel pulled at to validate you. When you share something about yourself with the intent of offering something to others, it feels like a gift. This is clearly illustrated in the wonderful movie, *Good Will Hunting*. In this movie the therapist, played by Robin Williams, shares much personal information about himself with his client Will, an angry and resistant young man. He shared it, not because he wanted or needed anything back, but purely to help Will feel safe in opening to his own pain.

We can all challenge ourselves to be aware of our intent when we offer positive feedback to others – is it a true gift or does it have strings attached? And we can challenge ourselves to be aware of our intent when we share things about ourselves – are we giving or trying to get? Giving to get doesn't feel good to others who are at the other end of the pull, and getting what we want from others feels good only for the moment, but is ultimately tiring for us. It is tiring to always be trying to get from others what we need to be giving to ourselves.

Giving appreciation and sharing ourselves from a loving heart, with no need to get anything back, will always feel wonderful and energizing to us and to others.

Margaret Paul, Ph.D. is the best-selling author and co-author of eight books, including "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By You?" She is the co-creator of the powerful Inner Bonding healing process. Learn Inner Bonding now! Visit her web site for a FREE Inner Bonding course:

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