Three Good Things (GEE-3): Gifts, Grace, & Gratitude

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Positive Psychology
Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000)

- Focus on human strengths and potentials instead of on problems and remedies
- “The aim of positive psychology is to begin to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities” (p.5).
Positive Psychology
(Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)

- At the subjective level involves studying:
  - Gratitude, Well-being, Contentment, & Satisfaction (past)
  - Hope & Optimism (future)
  - Flow & Happiness (present)

- **Gratitude** ties the past with the present and influences the future
Positivity
(Frederickson, 1998; 2000; 2009)

- Positive emotions
  - More than the absence of negative emotions
  - Joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love

- Emotions trigger “specific action-tendencies” (Frigda, 1986)
GIFT, n.
1. something given voluntarily without payment in return, as to show favor toward someone, honor an occasion, or make a gesture of assistance; present.

2. the act of giving.

3. something bestowed or acquired without any particular effort by the recipient or without its being earned: Those extra points he got in the game were a total gift.

4. a special ability or capacity; natural endowment; talent: the gift of saying the right thing at the right time.

GIFT, v. (used with object)
5. to present with as a gift; bestow gifts upon; endow with.

6. to present (someone) with a gift: just the thing to gift the newlyweds.
¡Gracias! Grazie! When a Spanish or Italian speaker says thanks, they are invoking one of the meanings behind the word grace. That’s because grace, gracias, and grazie all descend from the same Latin word, grātia.

For the ancient Romans, grātia had three distinct meanings:
(1) a pleasing quality, (2) favor or goodwill, and (3) gratitude or thanks.

We find all three of these meanings in modern-day English.

(1) When we describe someone as having (or not having) grace: “Dancing, she had all the grace of an elephant on skates.”

(2) When we talk about giving or getting grace: “by the grace of God.”

(3) When we say grace (i.e., “thanks”) at a meal.

If you have something to be grateful for, say thank-you, grātia, gracias, or grazie.
Gratitude is the inward feeling of kindness received. Thankfulness is the natural impulse to express that feeling. Thanksgiving is the following of that impulse.

Henry Van Dyke
Purpose

• Purpose is to introduce you to the connection between Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being

• Goals are to
  • Show the relationship between gratitude and well-being
  • Provide proven approaches to increasing gratitude and well-being
  • Give you a chance to practice gratitude!
The Human Condition

- Yearn for love
- Yearn for understanding
- Yearn for compassion
- Yearn for happiness
  - Positive emotion and pleasure
  - Engagement with life
  - Meaning
- Get caught in traps
“The hardest arithmetic to master is that which enables us to count our blessings.”

~Eric Hoffer

*Reflections On The Human Condition*
Human Resources

The ability to manage our perceptions.
Human Resources

The ability to control our attention.
Human Resources

Diet Coke

The ability to manage our thoughts and feelings.
Human Resources

Tobacco Spit

The ability to manage our thoughts and feelings.
What is Subjective Well-Being?

(Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2009, p. 187)

- “Subjective well-being is defined as a person’s cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life as a whole.”

- Includes:
  - High levels of pleasant emotions and moods
  - Low levels of negative emotions and moods
  - High life satisfaction

- Used interchangeably with “happiness” but perhaps not the same thing
Gratitude, as it were, is the moral memory of mankind. -George Simmel

We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures.
~Thornton Wilder

The only people with whom you should try to get even are those who have helped you.
~John E. Southard
What is Gratitude?

- “...a felt sense of wonder, thankfulness, & appreciation for life” (Emmons & Shelton, 2002)

- “...experienced when [you] affirm something good has happened to [you] and [you] recognize that someone else is largely responsible”

- A virtue in all cultures and societies (Watkins, et al., 2009, p. 438)

- “a focus on the present moment, on appreciating your life as it is today and what has made it so” (Lyubomirsky, 2007, p. 90)
Correlates of Gratitude
(McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002)

- People who are consistently grateful tend to be:
  - Happier
  - More energetic
  - More hopeful
  - Experience more positive emotions & subjective well-being
  - More helpful
  - More empathic
  - More spiritual/religious (in a general sense)
  - More forgiving

- Gratitude may be rooted in positive personality traits (e.g., extroverted, agreeable, low neuroticism)

- However, these traits account for 30-40% of variance in gratitude
Correlates of Gratitude
(McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002)

- People who are consistently grateful tend to be less:
  - Materialistic
  - Envious
  - Depressed
  - Anxious
  - Lonely
  - Neurotic

- Most of these results are **correlational; however some are causal**
  - *Counting blessing enhances mood state (Watkins et al, 2003)*
Benefits of Gratitude
(McCullough & Emmons, 2003; Watkins, Van Gelder, & Frias, 2009)

- Count 5 blessings vs 5 burdens vs 5 major events (control group) once a week for 10 weeks
  - Gratitude group more optimistic and satisfied with their life
  - Fewer physical symptoms
  - More exercise!

- Other studies, same intervention, associated with:
  - Increase positive emotions (happiness, joy and pride)
  - Increased prosocial behavior
  - Better sleep!
  - Better access to pleasant memories if encoded with gratitude
Benefits of Gratitude
(Lyubomirsky, 2007, p. 92)

- Count 5 blessings 3x per week vs 1x per week
- Instructions: There are many things in our lives, both large and small, that we are grateful about. Think back over the events of the past week and write down on the lines below up to five things that happened for which you are grateful or thankful.”

- Results
  - No change in happiness for 3x week (got bored)
  - Big change in happiness for 1x week (stayed meaningful)
The Gratitude Visit

- Seligman Study: The Gratitude Visit
  - Several Interventions:
    - Write and hand deliver a letter of gratitude
    - Self-guided happiness exercises
    - “Three good things” activity
    - Assess signature strengths
      - [http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/default.aspx](http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/default.aspx)
    - Use signature strengths
  - Gratitude Visit produced most powerful and immediate boost in happiness that lasted for one month
  - BEST outcome in long-run (at 6 months) was the three good things activity
    - BECAUSE participants kept doing it!
How to Measure *Dispositional Gratitude* (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002, p. 127)

Rate from 1=strongly disagree to 4=neutral to 7=strongly agree

1. I have so much in life to be thankful for.

2. If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.

3. When I look at the world, I don’t see much to be grateful for (reverse score).

4. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.

5. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history.

6. Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful for something (reverse scored).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>How to Measure <em>State</em> Gratitude</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Watkins, Van Gelder, &amp; Frias, 2009, p. 438)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate feeling from 1=not at all to 4=neutral to 7=extremely</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>To what extent do you feel grateful?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>To what extent do you feel thankful?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Appreciative?</td>
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Eight Ways that Gratitude Thinking Boosts Happiness
(Lyubomirsky, 2007, p. 92; Watkins, Van Gelder, & Frias, 2009)

- Helps you savor positive experiences
- Bolsters self-worth and self-esteem
- Helps you cope with stress and trauma (perhaps related to benefit-finding) (Frederickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003; Watkins, Grimm, & Kolts, 2004)
- Encourages moral behavior
- Helps build social bonds, strengthen existing bonds, creates new ones
- Inhibits comparisons and envy
- Incompatible with other negative emotions
- Helps prevent “hedonic adaptation” (=habituation to a positive event)
How to Cultivate Gratitude
(Lyubomirsky, 2007, pp. 96-101)

- **Gratitude Thoughts/Contemplations**
  - Think of something/one you usually take for granted
    - Thinking led to > positive affect than writing (Watkins et al., 2003)
    - Perhaps there is a stronger emotive component in thinking/imaging
  - Swap a complaint for gratitude
  - Find a Gratitude Partner
  - Show and Tell (what makes you grateful)

- **Gratitude Journal**
  - 3-5 things for which you are currently grateful
  - You might start by listing all that you know to be true
  - Think about specific people
  - Repeat an average of once/week
Reminders!

- Don’t over-practice; keep it fresh

- Express gratitude directly to another person
  - Might not even be someone you know personally!
  - You don’t have to send it to get the benefit!

- There is a “cycle of virtue” between gratitude and happiness. They cause each other (Watkins et al., 2009)
Resources

- http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu
  - Seligman’s Center for Authentic Happiness

- http://positivepsychologynews.com/


The Gratitude Dance!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9z2ELaBVJY
Earth Wind & Fire

EARTH WIND & FIRE

GREATEST HITS
In daily life we must see that it is not happiness that makes us grateful, but gratefulness that makes us happy.

---Brother David Steindl-Rast

www.gratefulfulness.org