

Gratitude Is My New Attitude

As I mentioned in another chapter in this book, I lost memory of my entire college major during the fall semester of my senior year, and I lost some of my physical abilities as well. Being twenty-two years old, in a wheelchair with paralysis to half of my body, wearing adult diapers, and having memory loss was not where I thought I would be. Since I couldn't remember my college major, I had some pretty tough decisions that I had to make. I was facing what seemed to be an insurmountable mountain. This wasn't going to be easy.

I must admit, there was a time the thought crossed my mind, "Darcy, everything that you've worked for in your life is now gone, over, kaput." It was frustrating to think that all of that time and money spent on school was for nothing. I wasn't going to go down without a fight, though. Trying to jog my memory of recognizable images, my college calculus book was brought in for my therapy session to see if any of the words and diagrams were identifiable. All I could do was stare at the pages. I would try to concentrate and search my brain for familiar charts and emblems in the book, but nothing surfaced. How maddening!

It would have been very easy to get depressed to think that everything I worked for in my life was down the tubes. What was I supposed to do now with the rest of my life? Having a pity party for myself was an option. My mind could have been like a doormat, welcoming negative thoughts into my brain. I mean, having negative thoughts is normal right? The only problem with negative thoughts is that if you hold the negative thoughts

in your mind and your heart, they will become your way of life and consume you until all of the positive things happening to you are swallowed up.

Negative thoughts are selfish. They often hurt not only yourself, but other people. Do you know anyone who is negative or feel that they never get a break in life? Are they whiny and blame other people for things that go wrong? Do you like to be around this type of person? I was not about to allow this to happen to me. I was not going to join the “dark side”. I’m not saying that a person doesn’t have a bad attitude on occasion. We all do. I do. It’s natural. It’s not all about having a perfect, positive attitude all the time. Rather, having a healthy, positive attitude is discovering how to be your best. And that’s the secret that I’m going to share.

I must admit that I am generally in a good mood almost all the time. Yeah sure, Darcy, and what world do you live in? As corny as it sounds, I wake up in the morning being grateful. I’m grateful for a good night sleep, waking up and being able to move my legs and get out of bed. There were times when I was in the hospital where I couldn’t get out of bed to go to the bathroom and needed a nurse to assist me getting out of bed and into my wheelchair. Then, she would wheel me into the bathroom and help transfer me to the toilet. Oh, the things we take for granted. I’m grateful for having food in the fridge or in the cabinets. You know, grateful for the basics of life. I’m grateful for a car to drive. I’m grateful for the wonderful family that I have and love.

Whether you are going to class or to a job, sometimes it’s hard to be grateful. Maybe it’s a class that is giving you problems or a co-worker is difficult to get along with. I

mean, how happy can you be when you walk into a class and get ready to take an exam for which you haven't studied as much as you should have? You were pretty happy the night before at the party, but somehow, the thought of taking an exam wasn't too appealing. But, think about this for a minute. How would you like to go to class, get in your seat, pick up your exam, and blank out? No, I'm not talking about passing out when you pick up the exam. I'm talking about looking at the exam with a blank, empty stare. A stare that is easily readable as, "I have no clue what this first question is about." Doesn't feel good, does it? That's exactly how I felt with my memory problems.

Your mental attitude is like a fork in the road. One road leads to success, and the other leads to failure. I have found that your mental attitude is an important factor which attracts people to you in an enjoyable relationship, or keeps them away, according to whether your attitude is positive or negative. You are the only person who can determine how your attitude is going to be. Take a successful salesman as an example. The salesman conditions his mental attitude before he walks into a prospect's office. If he has a negative mindset, he will sell nothing. But, if he conditions his mind to be positive and pictures himself making the sale, he is likely to do exactly that.

I like to play billiards. I'm not a good player, by any means. I just like the game because it takes a lot of skill to hit the ball into the pocket. Side pocket shots are my worst, though. I don't know what it is about side pockets that I have trouble hitting them, but I do. Already, I've told myself that I'm not going to hit the ball in the pocket because I don't like side pockets. In my mind, I'm setting myself up to miss. I'm telling myself

that I won't make the shot. I've already lost before I've even started. This is what I mean by a negative attitude and negative self-talk. We are telling ourselves that we aren't going to succeed at something before we even try. What's the end result? Failure. A negative attitude leads to failure. Why is it that one person will make a mistake, and instead of getting a bad attitude, they are grateful they've had the experience, realize the lesson learned, and not repeat it again?

When people tend to have less than a positive attitude, many folks believe that the poor attitude stems from interactions with other people, but that's not usually the case. The bad mood starts before you go to work or class. Then, the bad mood colors the rest of the day and prevents you from having clear mind and judgment. Norman Vincent Peale writes in his book, "The Power of Positive Thinking," that positive thinking is not "a means to fame, riches, or power, but as the practical application of faith to overcome defeat and accomplish worthwhile creative values in life."

Gratitude is the basis for all positive interactions, in which many people lack. Imagine the interactions that you have with your family, roommate, neighbors and friends. One of basic things that we are taught as a child is to honor your mother and father. Honoring someone implies gratitude, and you are expected to be grateful for what your parents do for you. Whether your parents were lousy or not, has nothing to do with the fact that you couldn't have survived infancy and early childhood without them. Next time, think about how you can show gratitude to those around you. It may be just a simple "Thank you" or "I appreciate that" when the person does something for you. But

most importantly, it needs to become a way of life. We live in a fast paced world where gratitude is many times forgotten. When you show gratitude, it goes a long way.

Gratitude is contagious and comes back to you in many different ways.

If you had one more week to live, what would you do? What would you not do? Do you get upset over the small things? Why? How about looking at the situation from a different perspective – a positive way? You can't stop your thoughts, but you don't have to listen to them if they are negative. Being unhappy and negative won't help fix your problems, but it will make your life less present while you work through them. This begs the question, who wants to be around an unpleasant person? Not me, that's for sure.

There are many things in life that you cannot control, but you can always control your attitude. One of the most successful principles in life is having one of gratitude. Sometimes, you have to change your perspective so that you can change your life. It's not easy, but you can change your thinking by simply changing what you focus on. Have you ever put on some tunes because listening to the music put you in a good mood? Having a grateful attitude is no different. Practice being grateful, and you'll be amazed at how the feeling is returned. Surround yourself with positive people. These are the people who won't steal your dreams and will help you achieve success in life. And, having a grateful attitude is one of the secrets to a long, successful, happy life.

What can you do to adopt an attitude of gratitude? Which fork in the road are you going to take? Having almost taken the wrong road at a time when I was at the lowest point in my life, I learned the tools that would take me over the top of what seemed to be

an insurmountable mountain. I challenge you to have an attitude of gratitude so that you can be successful, too.

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