



Gratitude

“Thank you” and “Please” are the first two expressions we teach our children because we know that they are essential to social life, that they teach them to ask without demanding and to appreciate what they get. However, by repeating them over and over again, these expressions become automatic in our everyday life and lose their value as time goes by.

In our hectic modern lives in which we lack – or think we lack – time, we tend to rely on our automatisms as much as we can to try and save this precious time which seems to slip through our fingers. We also tend to take for granted all the modern commodities we have such as electricity, running drinking water, a roof over our heads, the abundance of food available in supermarkets... We run from one activity to another without ever stopping to enjoy, often even when we are on vacation. Moreover, the abundance that we benefit from in our societies – material, of available knowledge, of available activities, etc. – instead of bringing us joy, regularly becomes a source of frustration: we do not have enough money to buy a particular item or do a particular activity, we don't have enough time to read a particular book or delve into a particular subject of knowledge... As a result, we live our lives frustrated and in overdrive whereas it only takes a small change of perspective to permanently remove frustration from our lives.

When I lived alone in Paris, just after my depression, regularly, as I returned home after a delicious day strolling in my favorite parts of Paris or watching films at the movies for a whole afternoon which I loved to do, I would sit on my coach and, for a few minutes, I would let myself get overwhelmed by the happy fulfilling emotion induced by a pleasant day of small pleasures. At the



time, I tried to repeat this moment as often as possible because it filled me with joy and the feeling of being in the right place at the right time, exactly where I belonged.

Many years later, after the tumult caused by my daughter's birth, I continued to capitalize on these little moments of life which brought me so much happiness: my quiet coffee break in the morning when my daughter has just left for school, hot water that flows from my shower and gently relaxes my body or that cool shower in summer which refreshes it, the first spring flower in my garden, the sea water that caresses my feet when I walk on a beach, the sweet taste of a juicy nectarine...

I take the time to stop at each moment of pleasure to transform them into moments of happiness. To do so, the formula is quite simple: just say thank you. To whom, will you ask me? I'm not sure that it is of great importance, it could be to God, if you believe in it, to universe, nature, yourself... The only thing that really matters is our ability to receive: if someone gives you a gift, you say thank you. If this gift is not given to you by someone but by nature or by yourself – if you feel that you are responsible for the water running in your shower because you are the one paying the bill – say thank you to yourself or to nature or to whomever you want! The important thing is to take this tiny moment to feel the positive emotion that goes with this gift.

When I was taking acting lessons, I remember my teachers telling me, when I was acting out receiving good or bad news on the phone or in the mail, to take the time to process this news, that is to say, to give time for the emotion to rise in me and then transmit it to the audience, as in real life. It is this process that we generally skip in our mad life race.

When my daughter was four, my husband and I took her to visit Barcelona; We had booked a day at the zoo because we thought that, like most children, she would enjoy discovering lots of different animals. Unfortunately, it seems that we misjudged our daughter's tastes because she ran around the entire zoo with a "Okay, I saw this one!" after each enclosure and actually spent the rest of the day in the zoo's children playground. And this is ultimately how most of us spend our life, chasing time and money and missing all the beautiful things that happen to us, by not taking the time to embrace the positive emotions linked to them.

The lack of money is also a great source of frustration in our lives. We want everything we see without discernment – consumer society is well designed to create needs which do not exist – and are never satisfied with what we already have, often abused by our tyrannical and never insatiable ego which keeps telling us that we are never ever enough and we need more stuff to be whole, in any case, we are never as worthy as our neighbor whose car/house is more valuable than ours.

But how can we appreciate better if we aren't happy with what we already have? I'm not talking about settling for what we have because we think we can't get better but appreciating what we already have to know or understand what kind of better we want and what we want to change or to keep as our life evolves.

In recent years, while searching for answers to my questioning about how human beings function – reading books on the subject or attending online conferences – I discovered that all the great



modern thinkers explain that one of the greatest joys we are able to experience and which is able to profoundly transform our lives is gratitude, this moment of gratefulness we never manage to stop and enjoy.

This gratitude can be applied to extremely trivial things: sometimes I open my closet and feel a powerful sense of gratitude for my favorite T-shirt because I am so happy to wear it that day. In fact, if we move from one moment of gratitude to another throughout the day, we can cultivate and live in this emotion – and the well-being that accompanies it constantly – leaving out all our little frustrations.

The same goes for money. We always get frustrated because we don't have enough money to buy or do everything that we want and are sometimes even angry about all the bills we have to pay throughout the year whereas having enough money – some people do not have this luxury – to benefit from electricity, running and drinking water, a roof over our heads or simply being able to buy our favorite cakes should make us happy. I have tried for several years now the experiment of thanking the universe and/or money for being present in my life in sufficient quantity each time I pay for something but also when I receive my salary on my bank account and all other cash receipts to which we no longer pay attention to and which we take for granted. Money, like love or life, is a form of energy to which only we attribute a positive or negative charge in our lives – after all, a banknote is nothing more than a piece of paper with a pretty drawing on it which has no value in itself except for the one which we as human beings attribute to it – and if the charge we attach to it is negative, our subconscious will ensure that we have the less possible contact with it because its main function is to protect us as much as possible from negative or painful experiences. If we have a negative idea about money – rich people are not trustworthy, money makes people arrogant or evil, if I have a lot of money I would no longer be a good person, money doesn't buy happiness, I will never have enough money... –, we unconsciously tend to run away from it...

Being grateful for what we have, live, see, eat, love, places us in a process of abundance because, just as the negativity that we attribute to money keeps us away from it, we all tend to move towards the things that bring us joy. Therefore, the more time we spend feeling the happiness that accompanies our experiences – those related to money included – the more we will be attracted to the experiences that generate it.

I invite you to try an exercise that has helped me a lot over the years: as I had problems falling asleep, every evening, I practiced finding 3 things that had brought me joy during the day. This year, I began to formalize this exercise by starting a gratitude journal in which I write every morning, right after my meditation; I thank the universe for 3 things that bring me happiness that day or that brought some the day before, whether it was a sum of money I received, the song of a bird in my garden, the fan in my room on a particularly hot summer day, the people I love or the simple fact of being alive. If you practice this exercise daily, it will transform your happiness capacity in a very lasting way and, almost magically, you will experience many positive changes in your everyday life.