

# It's time to give thanks – just like it is every week

This is the time of year when we are reminded to pause and count our blessings. But it could be Thanksgiving every week. A focus on blessings and having an attitude of gratitude is powerful.

In my leadership work, I have participants keep a gratitude journal. They document those things, people or events for which they are grateful and give the reasons. For students, research indicates that feelings of gratitude have been found to have dramatic effects on individual and organizational performance.

Students keeping journals are found to have fewer physical symptoms, feel better about their lives as a whole and have higher states of alert-

ness and energy, just to mention a few or the benefits.

For people in leadership roles, people who are conscious of the good things going on in their lives, both large and small, tend to attract more good things. People want to be around them.

When we focus on giving thanks, it is easier to think about what we have in abundance instead of being mired in an attitude based on competition and scarcity. It helps leaders control the “shadow” that wants to creep up when things do not go our way, or when we don't get what we want.

For the last few years, right before Thanksgiving, I have assigned students to write a handwritten letter or note (not an e-mail message) to some-



Jann  
Freed

“

People who are conscious of the good things going on in their lives, both large and small, tend to attract more good things. People want to be around them.

”

one to whom they feel a sense of gratitude. In their gratitude journals, they are to describe the person and how they felt during the process of writing the letter. The content of the letter is personal, but I also ask them to journal about the response or reaction of the person receiving their thanks.

The point is for them to be mindful of the act of giving thanks. This has proved to be a powerful exercise, and students comment on how moved they were by the experience.

We don't have to wait for Thanksgiving to have an attitude of gratitude,

but developing the habit of gratitude takes practice. Cultivating a heart of gratitude is a way of life we can choose to embrace.

Think about the people in your life who have this kind of attitude. They are usually the people we would willingly follow and want to be around. We can choose to have the power of gratitude by making it a habit. □

*Jann Freed holds the Mark and Kay De Cook Endowed Chair in Leadership and Character Development at Central College in Pella.*