

## ABC's of Wisdom – G - Gratitude

“Gratitude turns what we have into enough.” – Aesop

Gratitude is almost a buzzword these days. In case you don't know a buzzword is a word or phrase that is overused and loses its original power like awesome and actually. Gratitude journals are common at gift shops. I have a gratitude app on my phone. It reminds me throughout the day to be grateful. I get a chime with a message such as “write about a time when a loved one did something nice for you.”

It seems to me that gratitude goes deeper than a simple, little thank you to God, another person or the universe. Gratitude is a huge thank you!

When I was a single mother I was grateful to be able to buy a house. It was old but near my mother and the location made it perfect for us. When the hot water heater broke and was finally replaced I was really grateful to have hot water again. After the refrigerator compressor went out during a brownout, I was grateful when I was able to replace it.

Gratitude can be relative. Here in the United States we feel entitled to a certain standard of living. Hot water and refrigeration are taken for granted. This is not so in some places on earth where refrigeration would be an amazing blessing for which people would feel genuine gratitude.

We experience abundance and joy more fully after experiencing lack and heartache. We appreciate the sunshine more after days and days of gloomy, rainy weather. We are more grateful for our health after we recover from the flu.

Deep gratitude changes us. It shifts our thoughts and our point of view. To do this we must have a holistic view of the world. We must exercise a depth of understanding of how the world works and our place in it. If we isolate and don't have much contact with the world around us we are not likely to be as grateful as the person who is involved with society, the person who realizes she is surrounded by pluses as well as negatives.

A study was done in which people who were considered wise were shown to demonstrate more gratitude than others who were not considered wise. I'd never

thought of wisdom and gratitude as related to each other until I wrote this article. People who look at the world and value it are usually wise and it is reasonable to expect them to be grateful.

In another study gratitude was shown to improve mental health as reported by Joel Wong Ph.D. at Indiana University. He states, "Much of our time and energy is spent pursuing things we currently don't have. Gratitude reverses our priorities to help us appreciate the people and things we do."

From Harvard Medical School, "In positive psychology research, gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships."

The older I grow and the more I know, the more grateful I am. I have lived through enough to appreciate simple treasured moments with people I love, moments of freedom to read a book and moments to enjoy our world.

No, everything is not as I would like it to be. There are many, oh so many, things I'd like to change. Yet I also know I have more, way more, than my share to be grateful for. And I am. Gratitude is not a buzzword for me.

*If the only prayer you said in your whole life was "thank you" that would suffice.*

*– Meister Eckhart*