

## REMEMBERING TO SAY THANK YOU

by Deb Elkin, LPC

The words "thank you" are powerful words, when they are said from the heart. They can convey to another person your love, your respect, and your gratitude. They say, in effect, "I see you, I see what you did, and I appreciate you." We all crave to be seen and appreciated. And it feels very, very good when we are. It makes us thrive.

Think for a moment about a time when you were on the receiving end of someone's heartfelt thanks (be it your boss, your partner, your child, a friend, or even a stranger in the street.) How did it feel to receive it? When we put ourselves out for someone, when we go the extra mile, when we do an especially good job, or when we are just being appreciated because we are who we are, we shine. It actually does feel warm and fuzzy inside (if, of course, we can take it in!). Our efforts are seen, and we feel valued. Our bodies loosen up, we breathe deeper, we smile inside and out. We have a better attitude and we often want to give more, knowing that we'll get more appreciation in return.

Now take a moment to think about a time when you expressed heartfelt thanks to someone else. How did it feel to give it? Usually when we speak thanks from the heart, we soften, and we speak from a place of warmth. We may feel our hearts swell a bit as we express our gratitude. And if only for that moment, we connect at a deeper level. That's because we have to really think about how to honor out loud, in words, who this person is and what s/he is about. And when we do that, it is very personal, and they know we saw them.

There is another interesting phenomenon that happens when we start speaking thanks to others. It starts coming back to us, and not necessarily from the same people we said it to. Over the past few weeks, I had been expressing a lot of thanks to various people in my life - some of the people who work for me for their dedication, some of the women in a support group for their deep love and friendship, some of the volunteers who were giving their time to a project I was heading up, to name a few. It was spontaneous each time, and it was heartfelt. I really meant it. And amazingly, it started coming back to me. The connection of timing was not lost on me! A co-worker bubbled over in her gratitude to me for my support of her and our program. The co-leader of my volunteer project left a message on my machine expressing deep appreciation for my commitment and energy and team work. And it felt so good!!

So I invite you to play, to expand, to feel good with this. Start noticing when thanks are in order and express them, from your heart, to people in your life. Pay attention to how it feels for you to speak it out loud. If it doesn't come naturally or easily for you, practice! It will get easier, and the effort will be well worth it. It has the power to change your relationships.

And when you are thanked and being appreciated by others, be sure to take it in! Open your heart to it, let yourself be seen, and bask in the good feelings that heartfelt thanks will bring you.

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