

The Diversity of Love Journal

How Gratitude Changes Our Relationships

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Social bonding entails reciprocal giving and receiving. These actions are essential for the proper formation of obligations between individuals and the maintenance of interpersonal relationships within human communities.

Because of this, gratitude clearly plays a vital role in interpersonal relationships. Recognizing and appreciating the people around us and the things they do for us is an essential component of practicing gratitude. Being grateful improves both our physical and mental well-being. It has a multiplicity of positive effects on our lives and on the relationships we maintain.

Due to gratitude, people feel several transformations in their relationships: personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal. They feel connected with

- (1) a part of oneself,
- (2) an individual or group, or
- (3) something outside oneself.

([Hlava & Elfers, 2014](#), p. 439).

The Sense of Personal Self Within a Relationship

Here are some examples of quotes:

It is a connection with myself, connection with nature, feeling comfortable in my own skin. (Gwen)

I do think it's—I think it's—it is almost—it is kind of a Zen experience in a very active way. But, yeah, I definitely feel connection and at peace with myself. (Ramona)

(Hlava & Elfers, 2014, p. 440).

The Sense of Connection with Another Individual, a Group, a Family, or a Community

On a deeper level, it is a sense of belonging to another individual, a group, a family, or a community. Here are some examples of quotes:

It's those grand gestures [of gratitude] that sort of remind you of what you have: wow, that person really is there, and is connected, and is—so it sort of supports the daily sense of gratitude and reinforces it. (Sally)

I feel like a light feeling, and it's a great feeling of just the love of my family, almost—kind of like sharing, that gratefulness that I'm feeling, it's almost like it's coming back at me, and it just puts a smile on my face and a feeling of satisfaction. (Lou)

Yeah, overwhelmed and probably, well, grateful that they're there because who else would celebrate with me right now when I didn't know I needed to celebrate. They knew what I needed before I knew that I needed it, and I was really grateful for that. (Roxy)

(Hlava & Elfers, 2014, p. 440).

The Sense of Connection with Something Larger or Beyond the Self

This sense of connection includes an awareness of something larger or beyond the self. This sense also engages an experience of awe. Here are some examples of quotes:

But I guess it would be some form of a spiritual connection, just a very direct, very personal connection with nature, with the ocean in particular, just being in the water. But it's more of an experience of bliss or being at peace with the environment and of just feeling full. (Luis)

I think when I'm in those moments [of gratitude], there's a sense of connection to something greater than me, whatever that is, I'm not even sure. I mean sometimes I call it "God" or "Higher Power," and I think that's part of what the sense of wellbeing and relaxation is, is the sense that everything is okay just as it is. I'm a part of that; I'm not separate from that. (Allison)

It really was a feeling of—like I had a connection, some connection outside of myself, and it's a wonderful feeling. (Lou)

Well, nature provides me with a sense of the oneness or the connection of all things being connected. So when I am in nature, I am connected, maybe I'm alone but I'm not lonely. (Sue)

(Hlava & Elfers, 2014, p. 440-441).

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