

## Gratitude Can Change Your Attitude

By Jeanine Eckenrode, MS, AT

With the year quickly coming to an end, November is a good time to reflect on the past months. Before the hustle and bustle of the holidays it is helpful to take stock in where you are and what you have. According to Wikipedia, “Gratitude, appreciation, or thankfulness is a positive emotion or attitude in acknowledgment of a benefit that one has received or will receive.” Research in the field of psychology has shown feelings of gratitude can make people happier, forgive others easier and make individuals less depressed.

How does that relate to your everyday life? As an art therapist, one professional goal I have is to help others see positive aspects of their lives through expressive outlets. This can be done in a variety of ways. For me, it is a three part process I refer to as the head, heart and hands theory. First, I come up with an idea in my head. Maybe it is an idea for a new sculpture project. Second, I filter the idea through my heart and allow my emotions to play a role in the creative process. By allowing my emotions to flow freely, my end product or sculpture will be a true reflection of how I am feeling. Third, I allow my hands to channel my ideas from my head and combine the emotions from my heart to create my vision or art work. The head, heart and hand theory can be used in many aspects of your life.

Take a few minutes right now to think about three things you are currently grateful for. It can be small things that happened to you throughout the day. Or maybe it is a relationship you have with an individual in your life. The next step is to think about ways that you can incorporate a gratitude ritual into your everyday life. For example, you could think about things you are thankful for before you eat a meal, when you wake up in the morning or go to bed in the evening, when you are waiting in line at the grocery store or when you are having a bad day. Maybe you could write a thank you note to someone who was nice to you during a bad day. Another suggestion is to keep a personal journal or “idea book” that reflects things that you are grateful for in your life.

In today’s modern world, we spend a majority of our time thinking about things from a commercial perspective. We are overwhelmed with advertisements to make us constantly think about the newest product that we must possess. At what point do we come to the conclusion that we have enough? If we were to spend half as much time being thankful for what we have then we would be twice as positive in our lives. Try to paint a picture of the positive things that surround you. Try to create a sculpture that reflects how you feel when someone gives you a compliment. Try to incorporate gratitude rituals into your daily routine. Maybe you will find out how the head, heart and hand theory can make a difference for you.

*Jeanine holds a Masters Degree in Art Therapy and offers workshops at The Center located at 1 Hoffman Street in Auburn, NY. For more information on art therapy and gratitude, there will be a workshop titled “Self Awareness through Mask Making.” on December 13<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 am-12:30 pm. For more information contact The Center at (315) 704-0319 or visit [www.TheCenter4Wellness.com](http://www.TheCenter4Wellness.com)*