

# State of Gratitude

Contributed by Joan Eison

Where is the state of gratitude? Is it west of South Carolina? Is it North of Missouri? Could I do search on Google and find it? Geography and web searches aside, gratitude is not a place on a map, rather, it is located within the self and is observable by our attitudes. A decade ago the use of the word "attitude" took on a new flavor when pre-teens and teens began using it to describe the cool/un-cool attributes of their peers. And more often than not when someone was described as having "attitude" it was meant in an unflattering way, such as, "Don't give me attitude!" As you are reading this description, you may even be picturing a shuffling swagger, a hat turned slightly side-ways, baggie pants, and untied shoe laces. What impression would you have of this person's attitude? "I'm cool. I'm in. Don't mess with me." Attitude has no age limits. Picture a fortyish business woman in a tailored suit, dark woven fabric, dark shoes, dark briefcase, extra dark sunglasses, silky white blouse, manicured nails, fingers holding a key ring with a push-button charm attached to it. The woman briskly opens the door of a trendy restaurant and without uttering a word immediately gets the attention of the hostess.

"Good afternoon," the waitress hums. "How many are in your party? Would you prefer window seating?"

"There will be four," the well-heeled lady says. "Seat us away from the crowd; we will need privacy."

This person's attitude message is one of position and power. Their unspoken message might translate as "Follow my directions." As limited as these descriptions are, we can't discern if their core feelings match the attitudes broadcast by demeanor and dialogue.

So, let's go back to the initial question. Where is the state of gratitude? Deep inner gratitude is as easy to recognize as fashion differences in the individuals previously described. Someone who radiates inner gratitude expresses equal joy at rain drops and four karat diamonds. They express continuous amazement at the everyday splendor of fall foliage, harvest moons and the wonder of the world around us. Tap into the energy of the state of gratitude. Take a deep breathe. Draw it from your toes to your head and set your timer for a mere five minutes. Mentally compose a list of all things that are working marvelously through and around you. The sun appears in the morning sky. Mother earth holds us as she spins in space. Beautiful phases of the moon cycle from crescent to full circle. Flowers grow in soil just right for them while cacti flourish in sand and rock. Animal friends love us unconditionally. We meet fascinating people who bring art, music, dance, poetry, laughter and learning to us. Birth families and friend-families embrace each other and share time and meals and joys.

If you started your gratitude list, don't stop just because five minutes ended. Preserve it and every time you brush against the serrated edges of life, soothe the abrasions with your gratitude

list. Gratitude is something we personally choose to embrace. Practicing "happy" more often than "unhappy" is about perception--like the proverbial half empty or half full glass. Every morning we wake up and every night we lie down, we have the power to choose gratitude by the thoughts that we allow. There is deliberate consciousness in choosing to see through the lens of gratitude. And every time we deliberately choose gratitude, we are reaching for higher consciousness and higher self.

Certainly, it would be daunting to put on a happy face one hundred percent of the time. Some days are painful. Some paths are rocky. But, even in the most challenging days, there are a few moments that we can maneuver into the warm embrace of gratitude. If you have created a gratitude list and positioned it in the forefront of your mind, it is an easy half turn to start at the bottom and add more. In one quick scan of your gratitude list, you will see an amazing transformation of spirit.

Ice cold water on a hot summer day

The scent of lavender soap

Birds singing

Dogs licking

Indoor plumbing

A roof that doesn't leak

Enough gas to drive to work and back

The coffee cream hasn't expired

Having clean underwear in the morning

The newspaper came

My neighbor came back from vacation

I'm having dinner with a friend

I am aware and conscious and grateful!