

The Art of Appreciation

Patricia Gruber
Extension Agent, Harrison County

Knowing that “someone cares” is a great motivator. Family members, group members, and leaders need to know that their contributions and efforts are appreciated and valued. A little appreciation goes a long way toward making people feel like they are part of the team and giving them an incentive to do their best work.

Objectives

- Understand the importance of expressing appreciation.
- Understand that different types of people are motivated by different styles of recognition.
- Become aware of various methods, styles, and approaches to giving ample doses of appreciation as needed.

The Need for Appreciation

Each one of us needs to feel appreciated. It is our human nature to appreciate being recognized for our accomplishments and achievements.

It is so easy to take each other for granted. In the hurry of responsibilities and the pressure of getting things done, we often forget the importance of letting people know how much they are truly appreciated.

Activity 1

- Give members a sheet of paper and a pencil.
- Ask them to take a few minutes to list the names of several people they spend time with regularly.
- Now, jot down how each of these persons makes a positive difference in your life.
- Encourage participants to express appreciation to these people within the next few weeks.

Appreciation “to Fit”

Appreciation, to be effective, needs to be personalized and creatively appropriate to individuals.

To be effective:

- It should be spoken or written.
- It should be specific.
- It should express what you see or feel rather than being an evaluation of the person.

Each one of us is motivated in different ways. We should express appreciation and give recognition on an ongoing basis, not just once a year.

Recognition or reward is very closely tied to motivation. If we reward people with things that are not significant to them, our efforts are wasted.

To meet everyone's needs as we work within groups and organizations, it is best to use a variety of ways to express recognition and appreciation.

Some group members will find certificates, pins, and luncheons truly meaningful.

Achievement-oriented people may feel rewarded and recognized by gaining more responsibility in their work or new challenges. Power-oriented individuals may value the chance to train or lead other group members.

Below are some examples of ways to appreciate persons and their efforts.

- Stop and talk.
- Encourage them to take on new responsibilities.
- Say "thank you."
- Let them select an item from a "goody basket."
- Give them a flower.
- Ask them to help plan.
- Listen to them honestly.
- Ask them to share information at a meeting.
- Praise them, in public, in writing, by phone, or with a pat on the back.
- Write a news release.

Activity 2

Give members paper and pencil.

1. Have members divide the paper into categories that fit their lives: *Family, Community, Church, Friends, and Work.*
2. Under each category have them list the names of persons to whom they have reason to express appreciation and for what reason.
3. Ask them to jot down the best way to express this appreciation.
4. Have them put a date after it as to when it should be completed.

5. Ask them to put it in their wallet's change compartment so they see it often and are reminded to carry it out.

I Know Something Good About You

Wouldn't this old world be better
If the folks we meet would say,
"I know something good about you!"
And then treat us just that way?
Wouldn't it be fine and dandy
If each handclasp warm and true
Carried with it this assurance,
"I know something good about you!"
Wouldn't life be lots more happy,
If the good that's in us all
Were the only thing about us
That folks bothered to recall?
Wouldn't life be lots more happy
If we praised the good we see?—
For there's such a lot of goodness
In the worst of you and me.
Wouldn't it be nice to practice
That fine way of thinking, too?—
You know something good about me!
I know something good about you!

Author Unknown

Care

James Van Horn and associates at Pennsylvania State University suggest that one strategy of keeping groups together and strong may be described as CARE. In their research, the concept of CARE refers to:

- C** *careful consideration or careful* thought and attention members show to each other.
- A** *appreciation*, a grateful recognition or sensitive awareness for each other.
- R** *respect*. Strong families and groups treat each other with courtesy and do not take advantage of each other.
- E** *empathy* - being sensitive to others' feelings and needs. There is an understanding of what others are doing or saying and why.

When properly used, honest and sincere appreciation works wonders.

- It stimulates interest and enthusiasm.
- It encourages cooperation and efficiency.
- It promotes happiness and good fellowship.
- It increases self-confidence and loyalty.
- It stimulates a feeling of importance and self-respect.
- It is a remedy for some of the ills and discouragements of life.

Take the Time, Please

A noted editor once noticed a particularly fine achievement by a friend, also an editor. He thought he would write immediately a letter of congratulation to his friend. But he didn't. There was a day or two of delay, and then he said to himself, "Oh, pshaw! He will get hundreds of other notes about it, so I shall not bother him with mine." Then he met his friend and told him how it happened he had failed to send his letter of commendation. "How many do you think I did receive?" asked the friend. The editor guessed many scores, but the real answer was, "Not one."

Ideas to Use

"Someone Cares" Kit

1. Candy treat – to say I love you
2. Smooth stone – to remind us that rough times help refine and polish us for smoother tomorrows
3. Stick of gum – to let you know I'll stick by you
4. String – to help you tie up loose ends
5. Quarter – to phone home
6. Penny – so you have enough sense to realize what a valuable asset you are
7. Paper clip – to hold yourself together when your world is falling apart
8. Lollipop – to help you lick your problems
9. Tissues – to wipe away a tear

Directions:

1. Gather the items on the "Someone Cares Kit" list. (Modify the contents if you wish to add your own personal touch.)
2. Place the items in a small bag.
3. Copy the "Care Kit" messages printed here and place inside the bag.
4. Label your bag with the words "Someone Cares." Deliver or mail.

Appreciation With Fun and Flair

People who volunteer love to know that someone appreciates what they do.

Try a few of the following:

- For the person who always seems able to turn problems into "opportunities" or "challenges"—Give them a lemon or a can of lemonade; attach a note that says,

When life gives us lemons, you make us lemonade.

- For the person who helps others get involved—Give a head of lettuce or some leaf lettuce; attach a note that says,

As a President you always "let us" make decisions.

As Recreation Leader you "let us" have fun.

As Vice President you always "let us" give committee reports.

- For the person who is always kind, warm, understanding and friendly—Give a cluster of grapes, with a note saying,

The reason we love you is your "grape" personality.

- For the person who is always cheerful and bubbly—Give a bottle of bubble bath with a note saying,

Thank you for the “sparkle and spirit” you give our group.

- For the person who is always asking questions that keep our group on target—Give a box of raisins and a note saying,

Thanks for raisin’ the tough questions.

- For the person full of good ideas—Give an apple with a note saying,

You’re the apple of my eye.

References

Lingren, Herbert G., Liking Me, Liking You, Nebraska Guide HEG 82-166, 1982

Lingren, Herbert G., Building Family Strengths, Nebraska Guide 1983

McKenzie, Kay, Self Esteem, Gage Co. 1991

Reist, Deanna & Schroeder, Debra, Laughing Your Way Through Life, Nebraska 1994

Vineyard, Sue, Beyond Banquets, Plaques, & Pins 1981

Gruber, Patricia, Leadership Day 1995, Harrison County

1997: 1M

Programs and activities offered by the West Virginia University Extension Service are available to all persons without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, veteran status, sexual orientation or national origin. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Director, Cooperative Extension Service, West Virginia University.