

GROW

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SESSION 1

Sowing and Growing

SESSION 2

Authentic Hope

SESSION 3

Future Outlook

SESSION 4

Belief and Trust

SESSION 5

Thankfulness

SESSION 6

Care and Kindness

SESSION 7

Courage



Thankfulness

ACTIVITY SHEET

The third character-strength that strongly correlates with post-traumatic growth is the discipline of being thankful despite the circumstances. Even in the face of great tragedy or ongoing difficulty, people who grow through difficulty recognise that opportunities can be found in the midst of adversity. As such, they are able to maintain a posture of gratitude. Thankful people tend to attract more good things in their life to be thankful for.



PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

This session is designed to help you:

- (a) understand the role that both faith and doubt play in the discipline of gratitude
- (b) learn the dangers of, and antidote to, a sense of 'entitlement'
- (c) discover the foundations and benefits of developing a grateful disposition

Faith and Doubt

Whether you bounce back following a critical incident, is not dependent on the magnitude of the incident, but rather how intimidated and discouraged the incident has made you feel. Even though you can have both faith and feelings of doubt, one is always more influential than the other. You ultimately have to make a choice as to which one you'll place your trust in? As feelings of doubt increase, faith decreases. However, as your faith increases, feelings of doubt decrease. Whatever you water will grow.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING SCENARIO:

A runner has been training for a number of months to compete in an important running race. There are many other good runners who will also be competing. Will the runner win? Maybe. Will the runner lose? Maybe. Because the outcome has not yet been determined, both winning and losing are possibilities. Ultimately, what the runner chooses to focus their attention on (faith and determination or feelings of doubt), will help determine the outcome of the race.

Q: If the runner chooses to focus on their feelings of doubt, what will the likely outcome be and why?

HINT: Focusing on feelings of doubt will adversely influence the runner's biology and ultimately, will negatively impact their performance.

Q: If the runner chooses to focus on faith, what will the likely outcome be and why?

HINT: Focusing on faith will positively influence the way the runner feels. Feelings of encouragement will in turn influence the runner's biology and ultimately enhance their performance.

Q: If a person thinks they can do something, they are probably right. If a person thinks they can't, they are probably right. How can they both be right?

HINT: Thoughts are very powerful. Different fields of science have repeatedly shown that whatever a person focuses their attention on, increases in their life. People typically achieve what they believe!

MULTIPLE SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINES HAVE DISCOVERED THAT WHATEVER PEOPLE CHOOSE TO FOCUS THEIR ATTENTION ON TENDS TO GROW AND INCREASE IN THEIR LIFE; AND WHATEVER PEOPLE IGNORE OR NEGLECT, DETERIORATES AND DECREASES IN THEIR LIFE. THE SAME IS TRUE WHEN IT COMES TO FAITH AND DOUBT. IF YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN DO SOMETHING (FAITH), YOU ARE MORE LIKELY TO ACHIEVE IT. IF YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN'T DO SOMETHING (DOUBT), YOU ARE LESS LIKELY TO ACHIEVE IT.

Faith rises when, despite challenges, you're still able to find things to be grateful for.

Doubt occurs when unbelief creeps in to steal your courage and corrode your faith.

Foundations of Gratitude

Authentic gratitude is not dependent on circumstance. If you enter into a relationship with a loving God who you believe cares for you, then you'll have a reason to be grateful, not just in good times, but all the time. Therefore, 'being' in relationship and 'being' grateful is more than a once-off activity (doing); it's a state of 'being'.

When explaining how life has been impacted, improved or enriched, the benefit of goodness is pronounced. The more detail is expressed and articulated, the greater ongoing gratitude can ultimately be cultivated.

Goodness doesn't happen by chance or luck. Goodness is bestowed. Therefore, through gratitude, appreciation is extended to that source (for example, a person, an organisation, a loving God).

3. GRATITUDE IS THE EXPRESSION OF WHY GOODNESS IS SO VALUED

2. GRATITUDE IS RECOGNISING THE SOURCE OF GOODNESS

Acknowledging there are good things in life (e.g. gifts, opportunities, benefits and blessings) doesn't mean that life is perfect or without hardship. Rather, in the midst of hardship, there are still things that can be appreciated.

1. GRATITUDE IS THE AFFIRMATION OF GOODNESS

When Tragedy Strikes

People who have experienced critical incidents and tragic circumstances may have difficulty finding things to be grateful for. But that's what detectives do – they search for clues of hope amid the rubble. Using the following scenario, become a detective and see if you can identify the three-core-components of gratitude.

There was no warning when the earthquake struck. A young mother was sleeping in her bed in the early hours of the morning. Her newborn baby lay by her side. When the ground began shaking violently, she woke in fear and held her baby close to her side, not knowing what to do. Around her, stonewalls began to crumble. She could hear screaming from people in neighbouring homes. It was dark and difficult to see what was really happening, but from the sound of the falling rocks, the young mother knew that she was in real danger. The closely stacked houses were collapsing as if they were made of sand. The young mother cried out to God for help, but each second that passed brought more chaos and terror. Suddenly, the roof above began to crack and give way. A long wooden beam directly above the bed dislodged and fell from the roof. The young mother instinctively covered her baby with her own body. Expecting to be crushed by the falling beam, the young mother was surprised when she looked up to see the beam had miraculously become wedged in between the bookshelf and the bedhead. The falling beam that she thought would kill her, ended up saving her. The large wooden beam came to rest just inches from the young mother and her baby. Not only did the wooden beam not hit them, but it also sheltered them from the falling debris and stabilised the walls of the room. In the aftermath of the earthquake, there was a terrible silence, and then the faint sound of rescuers searching for survivors. Eventually a crack of light appeared as a man's voice called out. The man cleared some of the fallen debris and brought the young mother and her baby out to safety. To the mother's surprise, every house in the street had crumbled to the ground. Even though her house had also been damaged beyond repair, due to the fallen wooden beam that stabilised the walls, hers was the only room left partially standing.

The mother has the choice to either focus on the good or bad aspects of this event:

(a) See it as great misfortune to be caught in an earthquake, or

(b) See it as great fortune that she and her baby survived.

Both perspectives are valid. However, one is particularly beneficial.

Q: In the story, what could the young mother find to be thankful for? What good things can still be found among the tragedy that took place?

Q: In the story, to whom can the young mother be thankful? Who was the possible source of the goodness she experienced?

Q: In the story, what are the key reasons why the young mother could be grateful? How was her life impacted, improved or enriched?

Whatever you choose to focus on will increase in your life.

If you always focus on what you don't want, you'll simply get more of what you don't want. Learn instead to be a detective and find things to be thankful for (even amid great hardship and personal pain).

Q: In the past week, what are 3 different good things that you have experienced that you can be grateful for?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Q: Of those things acknowledged, who is the source of the goodness you have experienced (for example; a person, an organisation or a caring Divine Creator)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Q: Of those things acknowledged, why are these good things worthy of gratitude (how has your life been impacted, improved or enriched)?

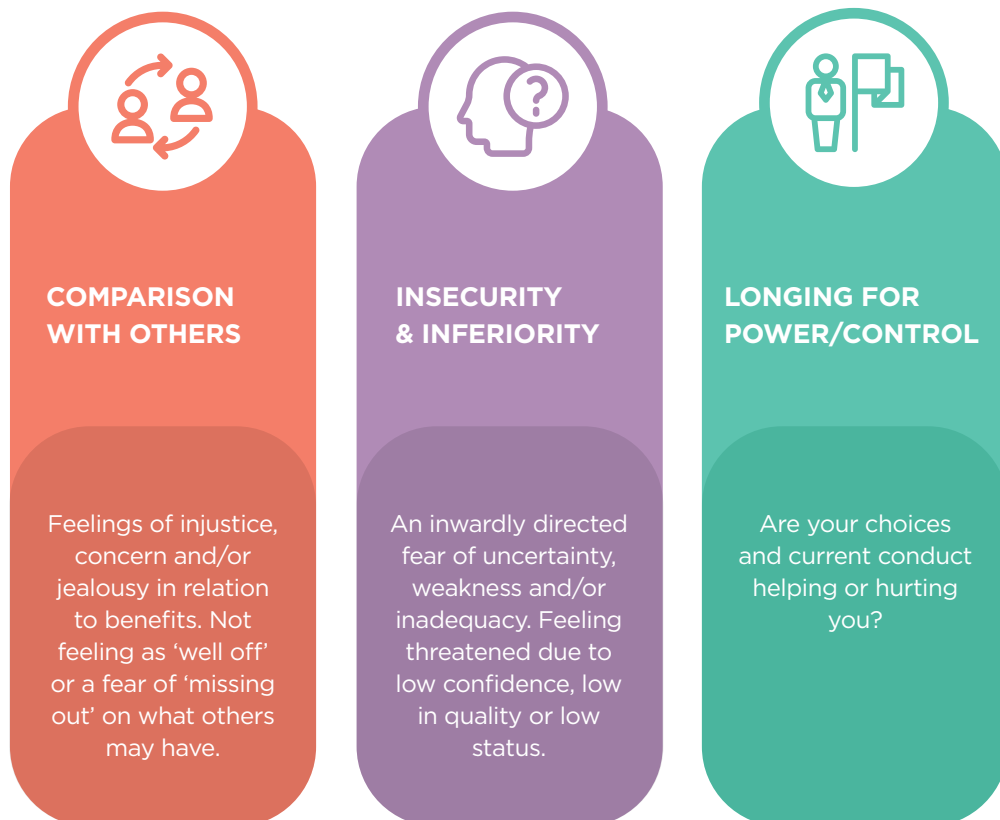
Grateful people attract and cultivate even more good things in their life to be grateful for.

Thankful versus Entitled

In any garden, there are always the plants we want to cultivate and noxious weeds that attempt to strangle our harvest. Plants need to be nurtured, whereas noxious weeds need to be pulled out by the root. In the same way, in order to successfully GROW through tragic circumstances, we need to maintain a humble attitude of gratitude – as this yields a harvest of emotional wellbeing. However, sometimes, gratitude can be strangled by a darkened heart that only wants to focus on negative things.

The opposite of gratitude is entitlement.

ENTITLEMENT IS AN ARROGANT ATTITUDE THAT'S NEVER SATISFIED. AN 'ATTITUDE OF ENTITLEMENT' CAN COME FROM (A) COMPARISON WITH OTHERS, (B) INSECURITY AND INFERIORITY, AND (C) A LONGING FOR POWER OR CONTROL.





The following scenarios highlight a destructive attitude of entitlement. From the two options presented, identify the CAUSE of entitlement: ✓

SCENARIO 1

A manager of a building construction site announces to all five of his labourers: “if the project is completed early, there’ll be a financial bonus.” The labourers worked efficiently over the next several weeks to complete the project as quickly as possible. In the final week, a sixth labourer joins the team. However, when financial bonuses were being distributed, the sixth labourer who only worked for 1 week received the same bonus as the five labourers who worked for several weeks. The five labourers complained loudly: “Hey, we should have gotten a greater financial bonus.”

Comparison

OR

Insecurity/Inferiority

SCENARIO 2

A life skills course (teaching design and sewing) will need to store sewing materials in a safe location in-between classes. One person volunteers to take charge of storing and looking after the materials. However, they volunteer not because they want to be helpful, but so they can help themselves to the materials whenever they like, as well as restrict others from having access to the better-quality fabrics.

Comparison

OR

Longing for Power/Control

SCENARIO 3

There are two diverse communities (made up of families from different ethnic or religious backgrounds) living side by side in a rural township. The council is looking to distribute running water and electricity in the township. However, one of the ethnic communities becomes concerned that they will miss out – they fear the other ethnic/religious group will get more or better services.

Longing for Power/Control

OR

Insecurity/Inferiority

IF 'ATTITUDES OF ENTITLEMENT' ARE NOT EFFECTIVELY DEALT WITH (LIKE PULLING OUT A NOXIOUS WEED BY THE ROOT), THEY'LL STRANGLE YOUR HARVEST OF EMOTIONAL WELLBEING. AN ATTITUDE OF ENTITLEMENT CAN RESULT IN (A) COMPLAINING, CRITICISING AND JUDGING OTHERS, (B) SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS, CONCEIT AND GREED, AND (C) DISSATISFACTION, ANGER AND DISHONOUR.



**COMPLAINING,
CRITICISING &
JUDGING OTHERS**

A tendency to unjustly point the finger, find fault and whinge to others. Rather than taking responsibility, people or institutions will be blamed.



**SELF-
RIGHTEOUSNESS,
CONCEIT & GREED**

An unfounded belief of moral superiority that's governed by excessive pride and arrogance. Selfish desire to take or go after things to which they're not entitled.



**DISSATISFACTION,
ANGER &
DISHONOUR**

Lack of contentment or heightened feelings of frustration. Manifests as manipulative demands, verbal attacks or disgraceful behaviour.



The following scenarios highlight a destructive attitude of entitlement and its effect. From the two options presented, identify which response is the RESULT of entitlement? ✓

SCENARIO 1

A man is successfully awarded a new job. However, he is told he will have to start at the bottom with the boring tasks that pay less. He'll have to prove his ability before getting promoted. He quickly becomes disgruntled with the boring tasks and critical of the low pay position. He ends up complaining to anyone who will listen (including customers) about all the things he dislikes about his job and the company.

Complaining/Criticising/Judging

OR

Dissatisfaction/Anger/Dishonour

SCENARIO 2

A humanitarian organisation is delivering bags of rice and containers of oil to households in need. Each household receives the same amount (1x bag of rice, 1x container of oil). However, one resident thinks they should get more provision than their neighbour because they've been living in the community for longer. One day, when the neighbour is away, the person breaks in and steals some of their neighbour's rice and oil.

Complaining/Criticising/Judging

OR

Self-righteousness/Conceit/Greed

SCENARIO 3

A woman has been standing for 3 hours in a long line of people waiting to enrol her child in a free education program. When she finally gets to the front of the line, she is informed that this month's program is now full (all spaces have been taken). She is told to come back next month and try again. The woman becomes so upset, that she starts screaming that she is not satisfied with having had to wait so long. She demands they enrol her child now and refuses to leave until they do.

Dissatisfaction/Anger/Dishonour

OR

Self-righteousness/Conceit/Greed

Develop an Attitude of Gratitude

People who've experienced great hardship and personal pain in the past may find it difficult to believe for a bright and positive future. Yet, given that the future has not yet happened, you have the capacity (and the opportunity) to influence what happens next in your life. Your attitude is the key that unlocks the door to your future.

HOMETASK CHALLENGE:

EACH NIGHT BEFORE BED, ASK YOURSELF:

(A) WHAT: IDENTIFY 5 THINGS THAT HAPPENED DURING THE DAY THAT YOU CAN BE THANKFUL FOR.

(B) WHO: IDENTIFY TO WHOM YOU ARE THANKFUL (MAKE IT PERSONAL).

(C) WHY: IDENTIFY THE REASONS WHY YOU ARE THANKFUL (HOW WAS YOUR LIFE IMPACTED, IMPROVED OR ENRICHED?).

THE FASTEST WAY TO PREVENT OR CIRCUMVENT AN 'ATTITUDE OF ENTITLEMENT', IS TO FIND SOMETHING TO BE GRATEFUL FOR (DESPITE THE CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES, UNFAIR SITUATION, OR DISADVANTAGED POSITION YOU FIND YOURSELF IN).