

The Value of Appreciation

Think about the individuals in your life with whom you feel most comfortable. Chances are they are people you strongly value. But just as importantly, they are probably people who have a sincere appreciation for you. Knowing that someone appreciates you meets a basic human need, the need to feel important. It conveys that you are valuable and worthwhile. Affirmations from others increases confidence and security.

Expressing appreciation makes it easier for others to feel as though they measure up and have something valuable to contribute. This is true of all relationships, especially in the family. As individuals gain confidence, it becomes easier to risk trying something new. Confidence in one area enables them to absorb the impact of failing in another. It unleashes their capacity for growth.

Personal responsibility is an important virtue and we are each responsible for our own actions. However, being mature, responsible and even reasonably independent does not diminish the notion that, for the most part, humans are not lone wolves. We are social beings who like to be part of the herd. We want to belong and know that we contribute some necessary asset to the group.

Relationships, no matter what the setting, are full of risks. To build trust, someone has to be the first to take a risk. When the tendency in a family or work environment is guarded, there is a reluctance to be expressive. In these settings, people miss opportunities to share how others around them contribute to their happiness, make their responsibilities more pleasant, or make their days a little better. Without affirmation, eventually, these behaviors diminish because others do not see them as valuable.

The ability we have to influence the lives of people close to us is powerful. Pride, envy and self-doubt often get in the way of openly placing value on others. Giving appreciation can be risky and individuals with low self-confidence may withhold such expressions, feeling rejected if they are not adequately recognized or returned. The solution is to give only genuine appreciation without seeking a compliment in return. The goal is to encourage others and requires that we resist making selfish comparisons in the process.

If you want to increase the behaviors in others you most value, then tell them what those behaviors are and what they mean to you. If you want to build trust and deepen your personal relationships, begin opening up and taking the risks of telling others how important they are to you. In the Bible it is called *grace*. If your words are full of grace, you will find that others may reciprocate. But even if they do not, they will feel more comfortable around you and a foundation of trust will begin to grow.

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