
S2C14. The fifth pillar - Gratitude

When you are struggling, it is difficult to find things to be grateful for. *'What part of my life you think is worth being thankful for?'* you may ask. Your pain may blindsides you to the things that you could possibly be grateful for. Even if you could see them, (which most times you can) you would not be inclined to look at them with any feelings of appreciation. Here is where I want to point out one fundamental difference between what the attitude of gratitude is commonly understood as, and what it actually is.

The attitude of gratitude is commonly understood as being thankful for what you have and others don't. That is to an extent correct, but not enough or palatable. For example, if you're going through a tough time with your ROCD, and if you're told *'Look at kids in Somalia, they don't even have food'*, you'll probably dismiss this line of reasoning, because how does their not having food reduce the amount of suffering, you're going through? Trying to tell you that someone else is suffering more may seem like trivializing your pain - as if to say your suffering isn't bad enough and hence not important enough.

Thus, while the attitude of gratitude does mean being thankful to the universe for what you have and for the positive in the world (Jans-Beken et al., 2020), this definition in my opinion, doesn't cover it all. The attitude of gratitude is the recognition of how much more you have over what you *think* you have. This definition doesn't look at anyone else's lot, but only at yours. Stop, look, listen - you may have a hundred more things to be thankful for than you realize. Those hundred things may still not provide a life that you'd be totally happy with, I agree. But those hundred things have already made your life better than you think it is.

So, in order to be truly grateful, you don't have to only think of things that make you proverbially jump with joy. Like, you don't have to win a lottery or you don't have to get a promotion, or your ROCD does not have to disappear. Understandably, if those are things that you're looking for, you'll find very few of them. Instead, look for things that would make your life worse if you didn't have them. For example, if you like coffee and you're getting your cup of coffee every morning, be grateful. What if it were to suddenly become unavailable? Would it not matter? Would it not make your life a tad worse? Why not appreciate it then?

How about running water? The ability to take a shower whenever you want? A bed to sleep in, however hard? A job, however unsatisfying? To reiterate, the point isn't about how much joy they add to your life right now. The point is how much misery or at least discomfort they'd add to your life if they were to be taken away. Or, alternatively, think about what you do not have in your life that would make your life miserable if you had to deal with it. Like toxic parents, for example. Or a physical

handicap. If you don't have these, aren't you better off than you think you are? Think about that. And be grateful.

But what does it have to do with ROCD? A lot. The Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley conducted a study in 2017 and found that people seeking mental health counseling and practicing gratitude showed significantly improved mental health, with lowered depression and anxiety. When you practice gratitude, you can reap some benefits. Make it a habit over a period of time to look for things for which you can be grateful. You do not have to ignore what is not working in your life. You do have to be aware of those aspects to be able to work on changing them. But you also do not lose sight of what you have and thank your stars, your God, the powers that be, or whoever you want to be thankful to, for them.

I have included a link to an article on Gratitude at the end of this chapter. Be sure to access it and read it. Also, get into the practice of filling in the gratitude journal every day. Each day find three simple things to be grateful about and fill in the Gratitude Worksheet in Worksheet 9 to become more aware of what you have in your life that you have been ignoring, that you can be thankful for. Both your partner and you can develop this practice to see your overall outlook change. Try to focus on gratitude towards your partner and for all the support you have been receiving in your journey.

In the next chapter, we shall look at the next pillar of recovery that is insight.

To-Do:

Read the gratitude article from https://t.ly/lcD_

Fill WS9 - the gratitude journal