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### The Art of Gratitude

When was the last time you went beyond saying “thank you” and did something to actually express your appreciation? In the dictionary, the word “gratitude” is defined as the quality of being thankful and one’s eagerness to express their appreciation, but I think it is so much more than that. Gratitude means paying it forward, especially for the people you love. Furthermore, gratitude can be expressed in many manners, improves one’s mental health, and connects us to others in beautiful ways.

Gratitude is like the soul’s oxygen. Although it may not always be apparent, it is always there. Gratitude can be expressed in one’s body language or facial features, like a small smile or slight crinkle of one’s eyes. It can also be communicated through small acts of kindness, such as writing a thank you letter, holding the door for a stranger, or helping your parents with the dishes. Gratitude strengthens one’s faith in humanity, as kindness always births a sense of appreciation and connectedness to others.

Numerous studies found that gratitude and mental health issues are connected. The simple practice of being in a state of thankfulness can result in a plethora of benefits that improve one’s quality of life. For instance, practicing gratitude can result in enjoying life more, adapting a more optimistic mindset, improving one’s self esteem, and increasing the likelihood of helping others and exercising. Additionally, gratitude can boost your mood, increase levels of

happiness, and help build strong relationships. Overall, expressing gratitude is a great habit to have and can result in a myriad of benefits.

Doing kind things for others can bring you closer and strengthen your relationship with them. With the chaos of everyday life, we can become preoccupied with ourselves and our problems, and neglect spending quality time with friends and family. Expressing our gratitude in the form of kind deeds allows us to take a step back from the pandemonium of our lives and focus on helping others. This enables us to take a breath of fresh air and look at the bigger picture, as we are now prioritized with somebody else other than ourselves. Time and time again, our stress and worries tend to emphasize a problem and its importance, but taking a step back and practicing gratitude allows us to take some time to focus on our core values like family.

Our loved ones—the people that make us feel seen, heard, and cared for—deserve to know that we appreciate them, and showing our gratitude is one of the many ways we can thank them. Practicing gratitude can be expressed in various ways, and it can induce feelings of connectedness with others. Additionally, it is a way to demonstrate our thankfulness, compassion, and love for the people we care about. Furthermore, it can improve one's mental health, strengthen relationships, and enhance one's quality of life.