**Ways to Use VIA Character Strengths**

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**CORE VIRTUE: TRANSCENDANCE**

**forging connections to the larger universe and providing meaning**

**II. Gratitude:** Gratitude is an awareness of and thankfulness for the good things in one’s life. Grateful individuals take time to express thanks and contemplate all that they have been given in life. Gratitude can be directed at a specific person, at a Divinity, or simply expressed outwardly for the mere fact of existence. This strength is a mindset of appreciation and goodwill for the benefits derived from other people.

**Too much:** ingratiation

**Too little:** entitlement

**Movies:**

1. *Amélie* (2001-French) – Amélie approaches life with an inquisitive nature and an appreciation for the little things in life. She befriends one shut-in neighbor, plays pranks, and returns lost items to their owners. Gradually this charming character begins to realize that her life becomes richer by reaching out to others and pursuing the details that spark her interest.

*2. Sunshine* (1999) – This epic film follows the lives of three generations of Jewish men living in Hungary. The movie does a great job of showing family similarities as the characters struggle with political turmoil, persecution, and family hardships. The grandson’s ultimate realization is his gratitude toward his family and his heritage, regardless of the pain of the past.

*3. Fried Green Tomatoes* (1991) – Evelyn Couch is a housewife living in an unhappy marriage. While visiting a nursing home she meets and befriends Ninny Threadgoode, whose stories inspire Evelyn to approach her own life with greater assertiveness and compassion. Gratitude is a central theme in the film, as the characters are able to change each other’s lives for the better.

**Songs:** Strength, Courage, Wisdom, Isn't She Lovely (Stevie Wonder)

***Suggested Actions***

1. Consider how this statement describes your usual mental state: “A still mind sees what is good and present. An anxious mind sees what is negative and missing.” Still your mind for five minutes in the morning and in the evening.

2. Count three of your blessings (good things that happened to you) before going to bed every day. Write them down in a bedside journal for when you feel down or blue.

3. Express your gratitude to someone whom you haven’t told before, preferably through a personal visit. Observe how your expression of gratitude makes both of you feel.

4. Every day, select one small yet important thing that you take for granted. Work on being mindful of this thing in the future.

5. Notice how many times you say thanks and whether you mean it every time. Notice when people do small gestures of kindness, such as holding a door for you, and be sure to thank them.

6. Express gratitude by leaving a note for someone who has helped your intellectual growth, such as a high school teacher. Explain how their influence helped shape who you are today.

7. Express thanks to all who contributed to your success, no matter how small their contribution might have been. Be aware of the degree to which your success is a product of others’ helpful influence in addition to your own hard work.

8. Express thanks without just saying “thanks”-- be more descriptive and specific (e.g., “I appreciate your prudent advice”). Observe how people notice detailed gratitude as opposed to a simple, reactionary “thanks.”

9. Write three apprehensions that you feel when you wake every morning. Before you go to bed, write three good things that happened to you and why. Then evaluate your apprehensions in light of the good things.

10. Set aside at least ten minutes every day to savor a pleasant experience. Decide to withhold any conscious decisions during these ten minutes.

11. Write a letter to an editor about an event that brought your community closer. Express your thanks to the organizers of the event.

12. Express gratitude to public officials such as police officers, fire fighters, and postal workers. Be mindful of the people who work hard, and in some cases put themselves at risk, to ensure your safety and comfort.

13. Before eating, think of all people who have contributed to what you are eating. Do this at least once a week.

14. Over dinner, talk with your loved ones about two good things that happened to them during the day. After you finish eating, express your gratitude for the conversation and company.

15. Think of three past adversities and identify three serendipitous goods they led to. Be aware that you can feel retrospective gratitude even when you were upset at the time.

16. Reminisce about your best moments of recognition, achievement, praise, and connection. Remember all of the people who helped you get there.