



As it turns out, he was right. I learned from that moment, and many others since, that I have trouble accepting gratitude, praise, compliments, and admiration. I mean, the sound comes in to my eardrums, but I don't always HEAR and accept the gratitude. I had to learn to stop, make eye contact, feel the gratitude in my body as a physical sensation and say, simply, "thank you."

Thank you. Period. Not, thankyouverymuch,itwasnothingreally...blahblahblah.

So, I've been working on this new way of receiving gratitude and praise, this "new body," if you will. And I've had some wonderful conversations that would not have opened up if I'd showed up in my old habits. Yet still, those old habits die hard.

Sharing Stories

First story. I recently received a wonderful letter from my younger brother, Kevin. He owns a business in Pittsburgh called [Elite Runners and Walkers](#), selling high-quality shoes and running gear to professional & recreational runners (5K, marathoners, etc). He is also a huge supporter and fund raiser for Team In Training, the organization that raises funds – thru running events – to fund leukemia research and provide support for families struggling with that cancer. We lost our youngest brother Sean to leukemia in 1995 when he was 25, and Kevin's life has been inspired by that loss.

Kevin wrote to share his joy at having been named one of the Top 50 Best Running Shops in the USA (out of ~500), an honor that is in part based on his community activity and his philanthropy. Wow. AND he wrote to thank me for the influence I've had on his life. He actually credited me with being a part of his success.

At first I did not know what to do with the note. I almost wrote back a lovely note of congratulations on his achievement. Period. After the note sat for a day on my desk, however, I realized that it had probably taken Kevin a bit of courage to write me such a personal and deeply-felt letter, and I need to hear what he's saying to me: Thanks, big brother! My response to Kevin was full of pride AND acceptance. I felt honored by his letter, and I hope he felt honored by my response.

Second story. This past weekend I attended a three-day conference to complete my coach training through the [Newfield Network](#). I joined this wonderful, international learning community in 2005, and last saw my classmates in July.

On the final day of the conference Angela, a brilliant and sensitive woman from Columbia, came to me and said, "I need to talk with you. Why did you run away from me before? I told you I want to thank you."

Two days earlier, we'd had conversation that I thought was complete. Angela did not feel it was complete. She had not felt HEARD in that conversation. She forced me to look in her eyes as she told me that what I had helped her learn in one of our coaching exercises in July had changed her life.

I remembered the moment. Angela lives in a South American culture that does not traditionally value women, and she carried that with her all the time. I had helped her learn to declare, in her head and her heart and her body, "I am a strong and confident woman." We'd actually shifted



how she stands and walks, such that this statement felt more true for her. Apparently, this new way of being and this new declaration have rocked her world.

In that moment, I felt Angela's gratitude wash over me like an ocean wave. It was warm and powerful. And she said, with a big smile, "I think you get what I'm saying. Now, I feel heard."

So for the holiday this year, I'm practicing both Thanks GIVING as well as Thanks GETTING.

Do this for yourself

Consider how you accept gratitude. Do you "open the gift," set it aside for later, or reject it altogether, tossing it in your closet, unopened?

For the next few weeks, which for many of us are filled with gifting and goodwill, pay attention to how you handle thanks and gratitude. When someone thanks you, instead of lobbing a quick "you're welcome" over your shoulder, stop for a moment, smile, look into their eyes and say, carefully and from your heart, "you are welcome" or "it was my pleasure."

And when someone expresses praise or appreciation or shares a compliment with you, take a deep breath, breathing that appreciation into the core of your body, and pause a moment to FEEL as well as HEAR what is being said. Feel the smile emerge on your face. Then say, simply, "thank you."

Thank you. Accept the gift, unwrap it, and see that gift through the eyes of the person who picked it out specially for you and so carefully wrapped it and made a point of delivering it.

Thank you. Show respect for that person who did the giving.

Thank you. GET the thanks, and honor the act of giving.

~*~*~QUOTES & TIPS~*~*

"We count our miseries carefully, and accept our blessings without much thought." ~Chinese Proverb

"Whatever we are waiting for -- peace of mind, contentment, grace, the inner awareness of simple abundance -- it will surely come to us, but only when we are ready to receive it with an open and grateful heart." ~Ellen Vaughn

"Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others" ~Sir Winston Churchill

The 13 Principles of Happiness remind us of the intentional actions we can take to experience more happiness and gratitude in our lives. If you'd like to download a 1-page summary of the 13 Principles of Happiness as a reference, you can do so at:

<http://www.1leadercoach.com/happiness/philosophies.cfm>

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II. IN THE WORKPLACE: GIVING MORE THAN "JUST ENOUGH"

