

# SEEDS OF GRATITUDE: WHAT THE NEW SCIENCE OF GRATITUDE CAN TEACH US ABOUT INSULATING TRUST BENEFICIARIES AGAINST ENTITLEMENT AND AFFLUENZA

## The Trust with Your Voice and Vision

**Fostering appreciation and gratitude in givers and receivers enriches families, generation after generation.**

### KEY POINTS

- Scientific research has demonstrated that a practice of gratitude not only increases our happiness and well-being by 25%, on average, but also allows us to avoid the negative effects of entitlement and affluenza.
- There are three active ingredients necessary to trigger the power of gratitude and appreciation in the life of a trust beneficiary
- If not all three of these active ingredients are present then the potential positive impact of gratitude and appreciation can be lost
- We “plant seeds of gratitude” in trust documents by capturing the Trustmaker’s voice with regard to his/her feelings about the “Why” I am making this gift for your benefit and the “How” I hope this gift can enhance your life.
- A powerful practice we can suggest to trust beneficiaries is that they write in a gratitude journal five things each day for which they have felt profound gratitude or appreciation. These short statements shouldn’t focus on money itself but could focus on opportunities and benefits made possible through their inheritance or trust gift.
- A trust beneficiary might consider starting a distribution gratitude journal. But this idea will be most powerful if it starts with the beneficiary and it shouldn’t be forced on a beneficiary through an “incentive” provision.



*Thanks! How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier* by Dr. Robert Emmons of the University of California at Davis documents the research that has been done over the last eleven years on the twin virtues of gratitude and appreciation. Dr. Emmons has identified three active ingredients that must be present for gratitude to produce its most powerful results in the life of the recipient of a good deed, gift, inheritance, etc.

First, the giver of the gift must be acting in a powerful state of emotional currency. The giver must feel strong desires of generosity and generativity. The giver (in our specific instance this would be the Trustmaker) should not be acting out of a desire to gain a personal tax deduction, to rule from the grave or to impose stipulations on the performance of the recipient of the gift (beneficiary).

Second, it is imperative the beneficiary be aware of these positive feelings of generosity, love and generativity. If the beneficiary isn't aware of the Trustmaker's positive feelings and intentions then this second active ingredient won't be operative. A dramatic example of this was related to me recently by a financial planner whose son decided to take his wife and newborn child back to meet with his grandmother. The son had not been particularly close to the grandmother. But each year, ever since he was a little boy, the grandmother would send him a check for the largest amount which could be given within the gift tax limits and not incur a taxable gift. He didn't understand the reasons behind these gifts or why the amount was calculated to a certain amount each year. After spending a few days at his grandmother's home, he boldly asked her why she made these annual gifts to him. She replied that she did it because she loved him; she wanted to enhance his opportunities for getting a top rated education and to make his adult life easier. He was shocked by her answer. For years he had assumed that all he was to his grandmother was a tax deduction. When he explained this misunderstanding to her and confirmed that she had made the gift without any reduction in her income taxes, he felt for the first time a powerful sense of gratitude for her gifts of money which were triggered by her desire to give him a boost in life. This is the second active ingredient of gratitude at work.

The third active ingredient of gratitude is the practice of a gratitude journal. Why can't you just think about how grateful you are? Why do you have to sit down and take the time to write out short expressions of the profound gratitude and appreciation you have felt during the last 24 hours? Dr. Emmons shares a few hypothesis for why the gratitude journal works. But what is important for us to understand is that daily written expressions of gratitude are more powerful than weekly or monthly journaling about the good things that have happened in our life.



# EXERCISE:

## Gratitude Reflection

- Think of one of the nicest things that anyone has ever done for you or one of the nicest gift that you have ever received.
- What do you know about the “why” behind this gift or good deed? What motivated the person who did this wonderful thing for you or made this significant gift to you?
- What can we do to help clients plant seeds of gratitude in their Purposeful Trust™ so that their beneficiaries will feel the love, generosity and generativity behind their gift?
- Do you see how all three active ingredients for gratitude can come together in a Purposeful Gift or Purposeful Trust™?

