

## Changing Your Outlook

One day a very wealthy father took his son on a trip to the country for the sole purpose of showing his son how it was to be poor. They spent a few days and nights on the farm of what would be considered a very poor family. Upon return from their trip, the father asked his son how he liked the trip.

“It was great, Dad,” the son replied. “Did you see how poor people can be?” the father asked. “Oh, yeah,” said the son. “So what did you learn from the trip?” continued the father.

The son answered, “I saw that we have one dog and they had four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our garden and they have a creek that has no end. We have imported lanterns in our garden and they have the stars at night. Our patio reaches to the front yard and they have the whole horizon. We have a small piece of land to leave on and they have fields that go beyond our sight.

We have servants who serve us, but they serve others. We buy our food, but they grow theirs. We have walls around our property to protect us, they have friends to protect them.”

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## Assessing The Power Of Gratitude

I have a good friend who advocates for and practices gratitude in his coaching practice and in his life and it has served him extremely well. In addition, my mother had a stroke in May and it has me reflecting on her, our relationship and other blessings in my life. So, I thought I'd share some of my own thoughts in this month's Catalyst.

The practice of gratitude as a tool for happiness has been in the mainstream for years. Long-term studies support gratitude's effectiveness, suggesting that a positive, appreciative attitude contributes to greater success in work, greater health, peak performance in sports and business, a higher sense of well-being, and a faster rate of recovery from surgery.

But while we may acknowledge gratitude's many benefits, it still can be difficult to sustain. So many of us are trained to notice what is broken, undone or lacking in our lives. And for gratitude to meet its full healing potential in our lives, it needs to become more than just a Thanksgiving word. We have to learn a new way of looking at things, a new habit. And that can take some time.

That's why *practicing* gratitude makes so much sense. When we practice giving thanks for all we have, instead of complaining about what we lack, we give ourselves the chance to see all of life as an opportunity and a blessing.

Remember that gratitude isn't a blindly optimistic approach in which the bad things in life are whitewashed or ignored.

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How is Your Outlook?  
Does it need to change?

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The boy's father was speechless. Then the son added this last remark; "It showed me how poor we are." ~ Unknown source.

This story illustrates that the way we look at the world impacts how we react and interact with it. This theme has been popping up a lot in coaching sessions this week. When that happens, I see it as a sign that many others might be struggling with the same issue at the same time.

"If you don't like the way something looks, change the way you look at it."

Imagine that two people are looking out the window on a sunny day. One might tell you what a wonderful day it is and the other might tell you the sun is too bright, the birds are chirping too loudly and it's too hot.

Both are looking at exactly the same thing yet, based upon framework in their mind, they see it very differently.

The way we look at the world, situations, ideas, people can significantly impact our response or reaction to it. It may propel us into action or possibly paralyze us with overwhelm. It may draw us towards a person or repel us away from them.

Just the other day one my clients received some feedback that his/her employees wanted more input on decisions. She thought she was already providing them plenty of opportunities and didn't know what additional opportunities she could provide. I suggested that maybe it wasn't 'more' that they wanted but possibly 'different' opportunities. This change in perspective opened up a whole different pattern of thinking and many new ideas to possibly address their concerns.

So, is it easy to just change the way you look at the world? For most, it's probably easier said than done. Here are a few ways that I use with my clients and practice myself.

1. **Change the language you use.** When my client substituted the word "different" for the word "additional", she was able to see possibilities she couldn't see before. The language you use usually supports your current view of things. So changing your language can open up your viewpoint to new possibilities.

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Instead of calling the people that work for you "employees", call them "team members". Instead of using the words "problems" or "issues", try the word "challenges". Instead of "customers" or "vendors", try "partners", and instead of "manager", try "coach". You'll be surprised how your words will help change your behavior and perspective.

2. **Brainstorm alternatives.** Ask yourself, "What's another way to view this situation?" This sounds simplistic, but it actually works.

3. **Physically move to a different place.** Ask yourself, "What does the situation look like from here?" Picture the situation being in the middle of an imaginary circle in your office. Stand on the outer edge of the circle and state aloud what the situation looks like from there. Then, move 90 degrees and state what the situation looks like from there and on around the circle. The physical movement can significantly help this process.

As I write this article it's very hot and humid outside. I have the choice to view the day as:

- a) Stifling, energy draining etc., OR as
- b) An opportunity to get things done inside without the temptation being outside, OR as
- c) An opportunity for my grass to get needed sun, OR as
- d) As a blessing that we are not subject to the floods of many other parts of the country.

I get to choose which perspective or framework serves me best in the situation. In this case, b, c, d, work best for me and are most conducive to my effectiveness. ♦

These are just a few of my ideas on changing your outlook. I'd love to hear your ideas. Please send me a note ([bburtch@harmonycc.net](mailto:bburtch@harmonycc.net)) with your techniques and ideas and I'll publish the best ideas in the next Catalyst Newsletter.

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It's more a matter of where we put our focus and attention. Pain and injustice exist in this world, but when we focus on the gifts of life, we gain a feeling of well-being. Gratitude balances us and gives us hope.

There are many things to be grateful for: colorful autumn leaves, legs that work, friends who listen and really hear, chocolate, fresh eggs, warm jackets, tomatoes, the ability to read, roses, our health, butterflies. What's on your list?

### Some Ways to Practice Gratitude

- Keep a gratitude journal in which you list things for which you are thankful. You can make daily, weekly or monthly lists. Greater frequency may be better for creating a new habit, but just keeping that journal where you can see it will remind you to think in a grateful way.
- Make a gratitude collage by drawing or pasting pictures.
- Practice gratitude around the dinner table or make it part of your nighttime routine.
- Make a game of finding the hidden blessing in a challenging situation.
- When you feel like complaining, make a gratitude list instead. You may be amazed by how much better you feel.
- Notice how gratitude is impacting your life. Write about it, sing about it, express thanks for gratitude.



As you practice, an inner shift begins to occur, and you may be delighted to discover how content and hopeful you are feeling. That sense of fulfillment is gratitude at work. ♦

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### ROAD SIGNS IN LIFE

On the highways of life, there are many signs that tell how far it is to the next stop, where the next turnoff is, where you're going. There are two ways to add road signs to your personal life.

- 1) Set goals. They become your own road signs for where you want to go and the route you want to take.
- 2) Give other people road signs about what you expect in the relationship. By sharing your expectations, you can initiate discussion and clarify both your expectations. ♦



## One Minute Ideas

### The Slingshot Approach

Have you ever felt like you were working and working, taking action and not really getting anywhere? Sometimes we feel like we're on the proverbial treadmill. So, what do we do? We take more action; try to accomplish even more. Sometimes taking more action is not the key. Actually taking a step or two back, looking and analyzing the situation, taking a break, or learning something is what's required. Taking less action may actually be what's necessary to propel you forward. This is referred to as the slingshot approach. Can you remember using a slingshot as a kid? You put the object you wanted to send flying into the rubber band, pulled it back as far as you could and then let go! Sometimes we have to pull back so that we can propel ourselves forward at much greater velocity. So, when you feel like you're working hard but going nowhere, think about pulling back to propel yourself forward! ♦

~ Bill Burtch, SPHR, PCC

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# The Magic Pebbles

By John Wayne Schlatter

*"It is the habitual thought that frames itself into our life. It affects even more than our intimate social relations do. Our confidential friends have not so much to do in shaping our lives as the thoughts which we harbor." ~J.W.Teal*

"Why do we have to learn all of this dumb stuff?"

Of all the complaints and questions I have heard from my students during my years in the classroom, this was the one most frequently uttered. I would answer it by recounting the following legend:



One night a group of nomads were preparing to retire for the evening when suddenly they were surrounded by a bold, vibrant light. They knew they were in the presence of a celestial being. With great anticipation, they awaited a heavenly message of great importance that they knew must be especially for them.

Finally the voice spoke. "Gather as many pebbles as you can. Put them in your saddlebags. Travel a day's journey and tomorrow night will find you glad and it will find you sad." After having departed, the nomads shared their disappointment and anger with each other. They expected the revelation of great universal truth. Instead, they were given a menial task that made no sense to them at all. However, the memory of the brilliance of their visitor caused each one to pick up a few pebbles and deposit them in their saddlebags while voicing their displeasure.

They traveled a day's journey and that night while making camp, they reached into their saddlebags and discovered every pebble they had gathered had become a diamond. They were glad they had diamonds. They were sad they had not gathered more pebbles.

Gather all the pebbles you can find. And you can count on a future filled with diamonds. ♦

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## Schedule of Public Courses

The following courses are being offered to the public by Harmony Coaching & Consulting. Click on the associated link for more information on the program or to register.

Course Title	Date(s)	Time	For More Information/Registration
<b>SHRM Learning System®</b> is the preparation course for the HR Certification Exam <i>(Every other Saturday)</i>	Winter/Spring 2014	8:30AM – 4:30PM	<a href="http://www.cbu.edu/shrm">www.cbu.edu/shrm</a>
<b>The Accountability Experience™</b> is a one-day workshop that helps participants discover the powerful personal and organizational benefits of individual accountability.	<b>TBD</b>	8:30AM – 5:00PM	<a href="#">Click here to Register</a>
<b>The Coaching Clinic®</b> is a two-day workshop for executives, managers and leaders to experience and learn coaching skills and competencies.	<b>November 7 &amp; 8, 2013</b>	8:30AM – 5:00PM	<a href="#">Click Here to Register or for More Information</a>