

Gratitude

We take a lot for granted. For example, you shovel in a quick breakfast before work, while checking your mobile phone, then rush out the door, your mind full of the things you've got to do and the rush to get to work.

So, did you give one thought to the seed that holds the genetic blueprint to allow the farmer to nurture its germination and growth, through to the harvest of the wheat? Then the processing to make it into Weetabix, the packaging and delivery, the road transport and the retail infrastructure. And all the natural processes of sun and rain and energy, and ideas and labour that made it all possible. Probably not.

Yet our daily life depends on a miraculous, complex web of interconnections and dependencies. This supports us, and makes it possible for us to breathe, work, live, and play. Our comfort and our food and shelter should not be taken for granted, or we're just being big, spoiled children.

Likewise, there's much more goodwill and support by our fellow men and women around us than there are threats. But that doesn't make the news. If we switch on the media channels, we'll just hear the bad news, reinforcing our belief that we need to hold tightly to what's 'ours'.

This is not healthy. It makes us believe that we are separate and independent. If we really believe that we may become self-centred or paranoid. That's not good for our relationships to other people, to clients, to colleagues, and to the planet.

So the antidote to this slippery path is gratitude. This simple practice has been shown to improve physical and mental health, relationships, empathy, self-esteem and sleep.

Here's a simple exercise to do at least every day this week:

Write down, each evening, 5 things to be thankful for. When you wake up, make it the first thing you do, to give appreciation and thanks for something – anything – the comfy bed, your partner, the bird singing outside, the hot water in the shower, or that innocent Weetabix!.

As a variation on your breathing practice, try this:

With every in-breath, think or mentally say 'thanks' or 'receiving', as you bring to mind the infinitely generous world that supports you in so many ways. With every out-breath, you think or mentally say 'offering' or 'giving', as you open yourself to sharing these riches with everyone else, in whatever way you can.