

Promoting Learning

by Dr. Marvin Marshall

Positivity, Choice, and Reflection Exercise for Students

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*Gratitude is not only the greatest of all the virtues,
but the parent of all the others.*

Cicero

With the exception of my “Learning Climate” article in the December issue, all my 2001 Gazette articles focused on the power of positivity, the empowerment of choice, and the importance of reflection and self-evaluation.

The following exercise combines these three practices of *positivity, choice, and reflection*. Hal Urban has conducted the exercise for many years with amazing results. Since young people think about what they lack—more often than they think about what they have—the exercise is a wonderful way to start the New Year.

Inform your students to conduct themselves for the next twenty-four hours ***without complaining***.

- Tell them not to stop the experiment even if they do complain.
Just have them see how few complaints they can make in one day.
- Give each student a blank card, such as 3 x 5 or 4 x 6.
This makes it convenient to note each time a complaint comes forth and each time they catch themselves *about* to complain.

The next day, ask:

- What was the purpose of the assignment?
- What did you learn from doing it?

Students will have discovered the frequency and smallness of their complaints.

Then, have students label a paper, “***I am thankful for,***” and make three columns:

Column 1 ***Things***

They list all the material things they are glad they have.

Column 2 ***People***

They list all the people they appreciate.

Column 3 ***Other***

What will emerge will be freedom, opportunity, friendship, love, intelligence, abilities, health, talents, peace, faith, God, security, learning experiences, beauty, kindness, and the list continues.)

Instruct students to review the list ***four(4) times within the next twenty-four hours***:

- In the afternoon
- After dinner
- Before going to sleep
- Before school the next morning

When attention is given to the *positive*, when the option of *choice* is recognized, and when *reflection* is employed, stress is reduced, life is conducted more successfully, and greater pleasure results.

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