



Solution Oriented  
Creative Coaching©

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## RESEARCH ON THE POWER OF APPRECIATION AND GRATEFULNESS

**Couples.** What researchers call “positive interactions” are at the heart of good marriages, healthy development in children and successful businesses. For example, researchers at the University of Washington have discovered that couples who stay together tend to have five times more positive interactions than negative ones. Couples who stay together often have real disagreements, but a strong pattern of appreciative and affirming interaction appears to give them the positive momentum they need to work through challenges.

**Bringing up kids.** The child development research of Betty Hart and Todd Risley produced a strikingly parallel conclusion regarding parent-child interaction. “They found that children who are the most intelligent, self-confident and flexible ... at ages six to eight had experienced five times more positive than negative interchanges with their parents by age three” By age three, the children who would thrive had received an average of around 500,000 positive interactions.

### Reframing the Story we tell ourselves to practice Gratitude

One possible first step in receiving each day as a gift is to think of any days in your life that have felt like gifts or blessings. This can be even more helpful if you write down these wonderful times as part of developing a journal of gratitude. Slowly, over weeks and months, you can begin to feel out an alternative way of telling the story of your life. Most people do not consciously pick their stories that they tell themselves or “themes.” “We more often borrow them from our parents, or are pushed into them by powerful events in our lives such as love, war, abuse, success or failure. A former soldier might weave his life story around the theme of “I went to Vietnam and got totally messed up.” Another soldier from the same combat unit might organize his life around the theme “In my family we get through difficult times by staying close.” These two men might have experienced the same horrors of war, but their different themes are going to keep them looking for and paying attention to different kinds of experiences in the present. **What they focused on grew.** The important thing to remember about themes or “mantra’s” is that although they may be deeply true, they are never all of the truth about a person’s life or about life in general. Life is always larger than all our stories, and the events of a person’s life can be arranged, with effort, to illustrate many different themes, not just one. This fact can open a path toward gratitude, even for people who have endured great suffering and deprivation.

**Exploring a new theme:** Receiving each day as a gift. Becoming aware that our themes emphasize some events in our lives and ignore many others can be a real jolt. But this jolt can empower us to explore more energizing and more life-supporting story-lines great inner kindness we can thank the themes that have helped us make sense of life up to now (they were the best we could do), and gently move toward themes that emphasize more of the good things that have happened in our lives and the directions in which we want to grow. This conscious work on developing a new story will make it easier for us to see opportunities for appreciation in all our daily environments (work, home, community).



