

# A GIFT MINDSET

## Why adopting a 'gift' mindset turns challenges into opportunities

Life throws us curveballs. Some are made of glass and are hard to catch, some bounce off us and others seem to fall straight into our hands. But why not think of these experiences as 'gifts'? How we catch and embrace (or drop) these gifts depends on our mindset, perspective, beliefs, experiences and values.

By adopting a 'gift' mindset, we can approach situations in our lives with deeper self-awareness, viewing challenges as an opportunity to learn and progress. Lessons may fall into any of the key 12 gifts: resilience, connection, forgiveness, growth, change, optimism, contribution, empathy, curiosity, courage, re-energising or gratitude.

The 2020 global pandemic presented gifts that challenged us and provided opportunities to look at life differently. We live in a hyper-connected world, but at the same time, we are infinitely disconnected.

A National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing indicated that 2.1 million Australians aged 16–85 had serious thoughts about taking their own life at some point in their lives (Slade et al. 2009). Causes include stressful life events (imagine if we could share these openly), mental illness and substance abuse. The gift mindset helps us to share more of ourselves, as a way of helping others.

## Where do gifts come from?

Sometimes hidden or buried in the past, our gifts, challenging and positive situations and people, are the key drivers to unwrapping our lessons or 'gifts'.

In the game 'pass the parcel', a neatly wrapped newspaper parcel makes its way around a circle of excited kids. Each child takes their time

passing on the parcel, hoping the music stops so they can remove the next layer to expose a small gift. The biggest gift always saved for the end. Not getting a gift was resilience-building and having to unwrap each layer brought you closer to the main prize - the real gift.

In life, challenging situations are like playing pass the parcel, the gift in the situation is never usually planned, clear or accepted in the moment.

Anna's daughter was diagnosed with cancer two years ago. She resigned from a job she loved to care for her child. Not long after this, she started a consultancy – resulting in greater work–life balance doing what she loves.

Just like pass the parcel, the initial gift is not pleasant, not chosen and the biggest gift is saved for the end. So, how can you adopt a gift mindset?

## Self-awareness

Whether facing a challenge or a success, the first step in adopting the gift mindset is to have deeper awareness of the event.

A crisis or success can send us into a tornado of confusion, denial and defeat. By going through the 'unwrapping' process, we can peel back the layers and see the gift in a way that serves others and us. In the practice of dealing with any pain or challenge, we can gradually build our strength to handle more.

## Acceptance

Acceptance is choosing to embrace or tolerate something, rather than resist it. It is sometimes seen as a last resort in a world which is focused on self-improvement and being better than before.

Taking the path to acceptance allows us to come to a place of wisdom, perspective and ultimately change. It is about developing a relationship with an experience that is

characterised by allowing it to be what it is; registering the presence of difficult feelings and succumbing to whatever will happen next.

Think about how sharing your story and lesson benefits others.

## Action

Sharing our lessons – the gifts – is not always comfortable; yet growth means moving beyond what we know, so we need to break through this barrier.

We can't move forward until we learn the lesson and believe what it means to us personally. Use risk-taking, making mistakes, or experiencing success, as a learning experience. Accept and share – don't bury it under a rug.

Sharing lessons can enrich the lives of others; help replicate success and is potentially a survival guide for someone else.

## A few questions to ponder:

- What lessons have you gleaned and how will you apply these?
- Who could benefit from your gifts?
- What is one thing you could do today to share a gift?

By adopting the gift mindset, we get to live our legacy right now by living a life of purpose, connection and contribution.

What will it cost you not to unwrap your gifts?

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