



a HeartMath e-Book



applied appreciation

 HeartMath®



## Applied Appreciation

Welcome to Applied Appreciation, an e-booklet in 'The HeartMath® Empowerment Series.

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Our intention in presenting this aspect of HeartMath's material is to share practical information and useful techniques with people who are looking for a more satisfying and fulfilling life experience.

We appreciate and support your interest in the HeartMath System, and in learning how to use your own heart's intelligence as an efficient source of intuition and answers to apply to all areas of your life.

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## Applied Appreciation

In this e-booklet, you will learn about one of the most powerful core heart feelings of all. It's a feeling we've all experienced, but few people understand how powerful it can be. The feeling is appreciation.

Think about how different life looks when seen through the eyes of appreciation. When you are with friends and loved ones you really appreciate, life's inconveniences just don't seem as significant. When a manager or co-worker offers you a gesture of appreciation for something you've accomplished, the tone of an ordinary work day can take on a new sense of excitement. When you're on vacation, standing on top of a mountain appreciating a magnificent view and the beauty of nature, problems seems to melt into the background. These are just a few of the many examples of the power of appreciation.

In the HeartMath® System there are many heart power tools that can regenerate and sustain you. They are based on the core heart feelings that we all want to have more of anyway—feelings like appreciation, care, sincerity, compassion, kindness, forgiveness, and love. Of all of these core heart feelings, appreciation is one of the most effective for giving you an energy boost and changing your perspective.

The word "appreciation" means to be thankful and express admiration, approval, or gratitude. Appreciation also means that something has increased in value. Material things, such as art, collectibles and property are said to "appreciate" when their market value rises. By applying the heart power tool of appreciation, you can actively increase the value of your life.

Every time you take a moment to appreciate your friends, loved ones and even strangers, the value you perceive in them grows. When you appreciate yourself and the wonderful bounty of your life, your own value increases, both to yourself and others.

### **Part I: Appreciation: A Super Power Tool**

Appreciation when applied with sincerity is powerful because it rapidly brings about a quick attitude adjustment and perception shift.

It gives a high-voltage boost to your whole system, releasing soothing and invigorating hormones into your bloodstream that nourish every cell in your body. The result is an immediate improvement on a mental, physical and emotional level. There are several areas where appreciation provides the most benefit. We'll describe them.

- First you can use appreciation to improve your mind. With applied appreciation, you will start to operate at a more optimal level. Instead of being mentally consumed by anxieties or problems, you will start to see perspectives beyond them, by opening yourself to an appreciation of how things are in a larger sense. Once you make that shift from being myopically focused on the problem, you'll find that you can think more clearly and possibly perceive solutions that never occurred to you before. Appreciation is like activating the wide angle lens on a camera.
- Appreciation is also good for improving your health. With the

nourishing biochemicals released into your system from appreciation, your body will thrive. Because you're less stressed-out when you are in a state of appreciation, you will gradually become more resilient against fatigue and aging. You will not only feel better, but you will also actually make yourself healthier by focusing on appreciation, instead of negative, destructive thoughts and emotions that drain your system.

- You can also see improvement from applying appreciation in the overall quality of your life. This is perhaps the most powerful effect because of the emotional regeneration that comes from a feeling of appreciation. Engaging the coherent power of your heart to generate and sustain appreciative feelings will bring more peace and fulfillment to your life. In fact, it's hard to have peace in your life without a healthy sense of appreciation for all that you already have.

Appreciation has tremendous power that has gone largely unrecognized. Among all the positive emotions people can feel, we don't know of a faster-acting one.

When you learn how to consciously apply appreciation, you will also be able to draw upon the intelligence of your own heart to activate many other regenerative emotions. The intelligence of the heart is that solid, clear awareness we experience when our emotions, mind and body are in sync. It's a high-speed source of intuition and wisdom that helps us see what is really best for ourselves and all concerned. One of the

benefits of applying appreciation is that it opens the door to this heart intelligence.

However, it's not just a matter of being in an appreciative mood. In this case, the word "apply" means to use appreciation with consistency and purposeful intent — and not just when life is going your way.

Every time you make an effort to activate appreciation, it shifts your perception of the world around you for the better. This is especially true when life isn't necessarily meeting your expectations. Holding this magnificent feeling in your heart creates a compass inside you for finding more of the good things life offers. Instead of making guesses about what's best in a challenging situation, and hoping you've guessed right, by applying appreciation at that time you will see more intuitively how to find a balanced perspective. You can apply appreciation in any situation you encounter.

### **Try It for Yourself**

Why not take a moment right now to apply appreciation to see the results yourself?

Pick a current situation in your life that's challenging.

Focus in the area of the heart. Pretend your breath is flowing in and out through this area. In other words, as you inhale feel your breath coming in through your chest. As you exhale, feel it leaving through the center of your chest. Now, try to feel some appreciation for the good things in your life. You can appreciate all you have, a special

person in your life, or anything that makes you feel good. Once you have felt it solidly, take that feeling of appreciation to the challenge you are facing. Now, if you can, find three things about this situation that you can appreciate.

You may want to start by appreciating the fact that, no matter what the problem is, it could have been worse. Once you can laugh and appreciate that, you can release some of the energy that has been locked-up in the problem. Even a brief moment of applied appreciation can literally change your physiology and start to bring you a more sensitive understanding of the situation. That's because appreciation connects you with your intuition, making it easier to hear your heart intuition.

As you begin to apply appreciation in your life, you will start to gain new insights in many situations you encounter. When you feel appreciation, your heart rhythms change and send powerful healing commands to the brain and the rest of the body. The heart sends signals to the brain that synchronize heart and brain, facilitating your mental and intuitive faculties. These powerful heart signals also trigger hormonal releases that regenerate you. Feeling appreciation has even been shown to boost your immune system.

As you practice appreciation, you are coming into closer communication with your heart—your fundamental source of power and intuition. You are also learning to be your real self.

Applied appreciation is like compound interest. The more you appreciate, the easier it gets to see the positive things in your life and to draw more positive experiences to you.

As you increase your emotional management skills through the power of appreciation, you'll find that your life starts to change in unexpected ways. For one thing, the problems that seemed confusing or upsetting start to feel less challenging—partly because you're looking for things to appreciate about them, but also because you become more adept at handling whatever comes up.

The sincere effort to appreciate gives you more inner control, more power to manage your reactions on those "off" days and "off" moments. As you practice appreciating the little things in life, then when bigger problems or situations arise, you find they are not such a big deal anymore. This is because appreciation broadens your perspectives of what is really important in life, and the rest becomes far easier to manage.

Once you learn to apply appreciation in your daily life, you may even find that fewer problems arise. Appreciation is a magnetic energy that helps you attract more benefits and conveniences into your life.

We've found that the more we apply appreciation, the more incredible people and fulfilling experiences come into our lives for us to appreciate. When you are surrounded by wonderful people and experiences, life is easy to appreciate!



If people spent half as much time appreciating the good things happening in their lives as they spend complaining about what isn't happening, they would finally perceive what an amazing world we live in. Now, we are not saying that learning to appreciate will make you a wide-eyed idealist, unconnected to the problems of the world, or ignorant of the pain and suffering throughout the planet. But so long as we stay in a self-created internal world of negative emotion and limited perspective which negative emotion confines us to, we'll never perceive what possibilities exist and what wonders are already alive.

## **Part II: Eliminating Incoherence**

Appreciation is what is known as a "core heart feeling" because it comes from the core values of your heart. Activating the memory of a core heart feeling can give you a powerful reference point from which to build your heart power to cut through stress and incoherence in your life.

Feelings like negativity, anxiety and dread create a state of incoherence inside you. If you maintain this state, by dwelling on these feelings, situations in your life can start going wrong in response to the strong, incoherent vibration of those feelings.

A shift to appreciation can quickly put you back in sync with your real heart power. Here are some examples.

When you're worried and overwhelmed or you feel emotionally drained, that pile of papers on your desk looks impossible and out of control. Or the size of your email In-Box is causing a tremendous

sense of dread because you truly believe you can never catch up. You think you'll never get all that work done and guess what—in that state you may not. However, when you're feeling appreciative and regenerated emotionally, that pile of papers or stack of emails looks different. You feel more confident that you can actually do the work easily and well. Appreciation is like free energy, and it magnetizes more creative solutions from within you or from the world around you. Appreciative people get a lot of help from others. It's no mystery why. We naturally want to do things for people who are caring, considerate and respectful. That's how human energy works.

The more coherent you are, literally, the more easily things get done. Even time seems to slow to work in your favor. That's because you have shifted into a different emotional rhythm.

Let's talk about rhythm. Great musicians, dancers and athletes know the power of rhythm. They can't perform at a high level without it. They also know the power of rhythm isn't in your thoughts; it's in your feelings and attitudes. Negative attitudes cause our rhythms to be out of sync and herky-jerky. It's hard to be in the flow when we're out of sync. However, as you bring more coherence to your emotional state, the positive rhythms of your inner attitudes help open up your intuitive intelligence when you need it most. Life will still have its ups and downs, but the changes are smoother and not so bumpy.

Wouldn't you rather have positive attitudes and feelings flowing through your system throughout the day—feelings like care, strength, courage, kindness, warmth, appreciation, sincerity, and fun? Wouldn't

you rather move through your busy days feeling energized and authentic, able to say “no” when you need to, and “yes” when you really can? Appreciation provides a doorway for you to experience a full spectrum of these qualities.

### **Avoid a Negativity Bias**

Although most people say that they love, care for, and appreciate others, if a computer could analyze their inner states, they might be shocked to find that they *assume* they feel these qualities far more than they actually *feel* them. Instead of consistently *feeling* positive emotions, most people feel and dwell on negative emotions like worry, frustration, fear and insecurity more of the time.

Despite people’s best intentions, many live with a “negativity bias”— a natural tendency to focus on thoughts and emotions perceived as negative. It’s built into human beings as a survival mechanism. A feeling of anxiety or dread can serve as an early warning sign that alerts us, even before we’re consciously aware of a danger. Negative emotions are not bad.

However what happens often is that people sustain a negative feeling state day after day, for no real reason at all. As they rehash those negative feelings, they become so familiar that they start to feel like the norm. Before long, people start identifying with a negative state of mind and don’t even remember that is not their natural state.

On the other hand, when you make a habit of applying appreciation, you can release the hold negative feelings have on you more easily

and return to a sense of well-being that is far closer to who you really are.

### **3 Things to Watch Out For**

The more you apply your heart intelligence, the more strength and resilience you will find to return to a happy, contented state.

Unfortunately, that will not change the fact that our culture constantly bombards us with negative, incoherent energy and messages. Because we feel the impact of these messages almost every day, it's important to stay alert to their effects and keep realigning ourselves with an appreciative state.

At HeartMath, we hear a lot of stories about the negative emotions and attitudes that people find it easy to slip back into without realizing it, and how they use the tools to lift themselves back out. Here are three things to watch out for.

#### **Sentimentality**

Feeling sentimental drains away feelings of appreciation. For example, if you are overweight and linger over memories of when you could fit into smaller clothes, that *sentiment* can turn to despair. It's not the memory itself, but the over-attachment to what once was and a sense of failure that can bring heartache and drain away appreciation of the good things in your life now. Dwelling on failure tends to bring up more memories of past failures or parts of your life that are not working now. Linger there—brooding over what used to be—won't bring you any clarity.

As soon as you recognize sentimental thoughts taking over, find a feeling of appreciation for something in your life now and enjoy that appreciative feeling for a few moments. This will bring you back to the present moment and start to restore your emotional power. It can also provide you with new perceptions about positive actions you can take now.

### **Anxiety**

“Low-grade anxiety” is now so commonplace, especially in urban life, that it’s become a societal problem affecting health, productivity and quality of life. For some people, even children, this perpetual anxiety can make it hard to generate positive feelings like appreciation.

Peter Gruenewald, M.D., wrote us about one of his patients who suffered from anxiety and depression for two years. When he suggested she try to find a feeling of appreciation, she developed strong feelings of anxiety.

Dr. Gruenewald said, “I advised her to instead breathe slowly and select a memory associated with the feeling of inner calm whilst sustaining heart focus. She managed this without any anxiety and felt relaxed and well afterwards. I then advised her to feel appreciation for the new calm she had and start transforming the inner calm into appreciation. This worked and she began to feel appreciation.”

Don’t let anxiety become so habitual that you lose track of your core heart feelings. Applied appreciation can eliminate a lot of anxiety and

remind you that life is about something far more glorious you're your anxiety would have you believe.

### **Dread**

People who have stored enough emotional significance in anxiety or fear sometimes experience a constant sense of dread. They cover the future with pessimistic gloom and move through their lives with apprehension and foreboding. This even plays out in children and teenagers who develop an acute sense of dread about taking tests, and in the process unknowingly compromise their own intelligence.

Whether it's about a conversation you'll be having with someone, an important presentation you need to make, the threat of bird flu or global warming, or simply having to clear out the blackberry bushes behind the house, there are always plenty of things ahead you can dread.

You can almost feel the iron knot of dread in the pit of your stomach as you drag yourself toward something that feels bigger than you or you stall to avoid it, saying: "Oh, I've really tried." "It's too hard." "Well, I know I better go for it, because if I don't, things will just get worse."

One of the best ways to deal with dread is to actively appreciate someone else. In the midst of your reluctance, do something that benefits someone besides yourself and shows your appreciation for them. Expressing your gratitude with an active gesture—going out of your way to show someone how much they mean to you and how glad

you are to have them in your life—can bring you renewed energy and immediately shift your perspective.

### **Part III: Appreciating Yourself**

Appreciation begins at home. The more you can appreciate yourself, your strengths and talents as well as your flaws and imperfections, the more you will be able to appreciate others. Oftentimes, the people who find it most difficult to appreciate those around them have made a habit of being exceptionally hard on themselves as well.

Sincere self-approval for listening to what your heart tells you or self-appreciation for accomplishing a goal or coming up with a creative idea, are healthy expressions of self-worth.

A healthy, balanced ego gives you a truer picture of yourself. A balanced ego expression would mean appreciating yourself not just when things are going well, but especially at those times when you slip backwards.

Appreciate yourself for whatever progress you've made, and then use that energy of appreciation to move forward. Recognize that to dwell in a "poor me" attitude or self-pity is a convenient hiding place. It's actually a form of ego vanity. The person who believes they are the worst failure on earth is just as vain as the person who believes they're the most astonishing marvel on earth. Both people assume the world revolves around them. Don't let yourself fall into either point of view.

## **Forgive Yourself**

Much of our contemporary upbringing has involved shame-based learning. The praise/scold process starts when we are babies and continues through schools and jobs. We internalize the process from an early age and learn to praise and scold our own feelings, thoughts and behaviors. This shapes our values and self-worth. When our internal praise or scold is based on our heart's intelligence, there is a balance in our values and an appreciation for growth. When praise or scold is based on extremes (usually heavily weighed to the scold side), we tend to become judgmental in our pursuit of perfection and approval. This sets us up for ongoing guilt and shame and drives a wedge between us and our relationships with others.

A friend wrote, "I have become more aware of how regret and guilt have prevented me from appreciating myself and my life's unfolding. For example, it's common for me to feel that I'm not growing fast enough, can't seem to get out of old patterns or honor my heart enough. I can see that behind this is a lot of perfectionism and insecurity. Going deeper in the heart, I've realized I could more deeply acknowledge how much I have learned about myself and about loving deeper. When these issues come up now, I try to go to a deeper compassion for myself and appreciate my unfolding."

We will come to appreciate everything as simply part of the process of learning and growing in life, as we peel off the layers of false beliefs. Studies show that aging gracefully and healthfully has a lot to do with how much we can appreciate or forgive whatever has happened in our lives—even if the people we need to forgive are ourselves.



## **Cultivate Resilience**

Learning to appreciate yourself can give you new hope and enthusiasm for your life. It can inspire you to reach new heights. Applying self-appreciation can turbo-charge your efforts. Just as you take in food and transform it into energy, you can use positive emotions, such as appreciation, to increase buoyancy and resilience.

When you are resilient, you can get yourself started again quickly if you get stalled. Being overly-critical of yourself increases the stress hormones coursing through your body. It drags you down, instead of empowering you. Without a strong connection to your heart, resilience is hard to find.

On the other hand, people who are resilient tend to regularly appreciate themselves and the good things in their lives. They acknowledge areas they need to improve with a desire to learn and grow. They don't make too big a deal out of problems and inconveniences. They are able to choose balanced attitudes and feelings in the face of challenge, which quickly improves their biochemistry and their health.

Resilient people also tend to have a strong sense of control over the direction of their lives and an abundance of energy. By applying appreciation, you too can increase your emotional resilience, maintaining higher performance levels as you meet the challenges of work, family, and life with increased buoyancy and equanimity.

### **On the Spot Appreciation**

Applying appreciation can take only seconds. Once you've begun to make appreciation a way of life, you'll find that you notice very quickly when your thoughts or emotions have fallen out of that state. Things won't feel quite right any more. Your perspective will seem narrow and stressful. As soon as you notice it, you'll be eager to return to a more appreciative state of mind.

While you're learning to reach that level of emotional maturity, however, it helps to remind yourself to practice appreciation at regular intervals each day. Appreciation comes naturally when you feel a love for what you're doing, or real gratitude toward someone or something.

So let's do that now. Put your hand on your heart, in the center of your chest, to help focus your attention there. Find a sincere feeling of appreciation for someone or something in your life (a person, place, pet, or a goal you achieved, for example). Choose something that's easy to appreciate, with no negative emotional history to color your appreciation. Hold that appreciation in your heart for twenty to thirty seconds. Note the shift in your feeling world as you genuinely choose to appreciate something and notice any changes in your perceptions.

Remember this place. It feels good here, doesn't it? It's the place you'll want to make your emotional home.

With a new understanding of appreciation and a little sincere practice of engaging the power of your heart to apply appreciation, you can

make great strides towards living a life that's less stressful and more rewarding.

## **Next Steps**

As you can see, at HeartMath we are true believers in the power of appreciation. What we've shared with you in this e-booklet has proven true in our own lives. Positive emotions like appreciation are essential for experiencing fulfillment in life. Applying and cultivating appreciation requires some heart intent and we want to suggest other resources that could be useful for you.

*The HeartMath Solution*, a book written by Doc Childre and Howard Martin, provides an in-depth overview of the HeartMath System, a comprehensive understanding of the power of positive emotion, and the science that underpins it. *The Hidden Power of the Heart* by the Institute of HeartMath President, Sara Paddison, is a warm, personal story about her journey in developing the qualities of the heart like appreciation. It is available in e-book form.

We've also developed two technology products that are designed for learning how to consciously activate and sustain positive emotions.

The *emWave® Personal Stress Reliever®* is a hand-held device incorporating a patented technology that displays your heart rhythm pattern and shows you how to increase your coherence level, a highly synchronized state accompanied by positive emotions. You can take the *emWave* with you anywhere and use it anytime to help power up your appreciation and give your system a boost.

The *emWave® PC Stress Relief System* uses the same patented technology found in the *emWave*. It shows you how emotions like frustration or appreciation change your heart rhythms and trains you how to shift into positive emotional states and regenerative coherent rhythms in a short time.

Both the *emWave PC* (formerly known as the *Freeze-Framer®*) and *emWave* are great training aids that will sharpen your ability to feel emotions like appreciation more easily and more often.

To learn more about the HeartMath tools, technology, and training programs that can help you increase your experience of appreciation and cultivate a state of coherence and emotional balance, please visit our web site at [www.heartmath.com](http://www.heartmath.com) or call us toll free at 800-450-9111.

We appreciate you and take care!