

# Aware Appreciation

## *Quick Start Guide*



**Dr. Gala Gorman**

AwarenessAddicts.com © Copyright MetaComm Media LLC.

Recently, I've found myself noticing something that has been right under my nose for a while. And, it's been startling to realize that my life would have been easier ... more fulfilling, peaceful or rich ... if my eyes had been open to see it (whatever 'it' is) sooner.

This is one of the many reasons to develop awareness. Awareness is what makes life sweet and juicy. It turns lemons into lemonade.

But, we're not going to leave it there. We're going to supercharge awareness by combining it with appreciation. And, the combination will expand your world in wonderful ways that are unique to you.

This practice will improve your life ... relationships, health, finances, work. Just about any issue you're having will be eased by applying Aware Appreciation.

Not convinced? That's understandable. I was a skeptic too.

Just suspend your disbelief for a little while. Long enough to get through this Quick Start Guide. If it does its job, you'll be intrigued enough to take it out for a spin. Try it for yourself.

Still not sure you're with me. Let's explore some reasons why you might resist embracing this practice. ***In order to benefit from a Quick Start Guide, you need to get started!***



**You've become accustomed to wallowing in your misery.**

Hey, I'm not judging you. Wallowing has value.

My partner in every way (husband and business), Charlie Frangos, challenges the "positive thinking movement." This movement would have us believe that we are supposed to banish all negative thoughts from our minds. When we find ourselves not thinking positively, we feel shame.

Shame is rarely an emotion that you want to become friendly with but it can be instructive. The basis of shame is the feeling that you're a "bad person." And, bad people don't deserve to be happy or successful.

If you're reluctant to practice Aware Appreciation, it is possible that you don't feel like you deserve the benefits ... the promised positive results. It's also possible that you don't give yourself any "wiggle room." It's a form of self-bullying.

I can fall prey to this practice. Sometimes I find it difficult to allow myself time to process my negative emotions. How can I "walk my talk" and still give myself the space to wallow a bit in the moment?

I have come to realize that, if I don't take time to honor my emotions, I miss a great opportunity. There is nothing like a period of wallowing in self-pity, accepting the invitation to a pity party thrown in my honor, to help you see that's not where you want to live.

Yet, there is a lot of learning available in that space of creative tension.

We have all seen people that must “hit bottom” before they begin to turn their lives around. When they do, great things happen. They are in many ways reborn. You can use this same energy without even getting close to hitting bottom.

By allowing yourself a limited period of wallowing, you get the best of all worlds. You realize all the learning that is available to you in the situation that made you feel like wallowing in the first place. Sometimes, it just gives you the space to see the other ways that joy is brought into your life.



**You don't believe the people, places and things in your life deserve to be appreciated.**

I could try to convince you that forgiveness is a powerful tool to improve your own life. Rather, I'll share a story with you.

One of our clients arrived for a session feeling pretty low. He is going through a divorce. He is separated from his wife...not living at home. His four kids are bouncing back and forth between homes.

It is a sad phase in his life. And, he was throwing quite a pity party for himself.



He said, “I just can’t get myself out of this funk. Even with my kids, I find myself having trouble wearing the ‘parent hat.’ I’m feeling like the victim.”

He was creating powerful momentum behind negative thoughts and it was crashing in on him at that moment. He needed a thought intervention.

Charlie said, “Let’s just try something odd here. Start thinking of things you appreciate.”

At first, he said, “I can’t even go there.”

Again Charlie, “Alright, let’s start with the basics. Just name one thing you’re appreciative of.”

He said, “I put my clothes on today. I’m wearing clean clothes.”

Charlie said, “What else?”

He said, “I’m healthy.”

Charlie said, “What do you appreciate about your kids?”

He said, “They love me. Even though they’re mad at me or hurt sometimes ... they do love me.”

Charlie began nurturing and coaxing the momentum that was beginning to turn around, “Okay, great. What else do you appreciate about your kids?”

He said, “They are great kids.”

As he began stretching to recognize what he could appreciate, his physical presence began to change. Each appreciation was settling in. He was making the shift from victim to a genuine state of appreciation.

The energetic shift was palpable.

A state of appreciation is much more comfortable than shame, self-loathing, and victimhood. And, they can’t coexist.

Even when you’re in the murky swamp of negative emotion, it is possible to find things to appreciate. This will transform your life experience.

In this case, it took about 10 minutes. And, while he wasn’t “on Cloud 9” after just a few minutes, the momentum had shifted.

He said, “Yeah. I really do feel the shift. I feel like the momentum that had been building up is gone.”

**This can work for you too. And, it can happen in just 10 minutes!**

So, you may be thinking, “They don’t deserve to be appreciated.” Or, “I don’t deserve to be appreciated.”

In this way, appreciation is similar to forgiveness.

We are told that it is good for us to forgive. It releases us from the ill effects of negativity. Yet it can be quite challenging to make the mental shift from, “Forgiveness is a gift for them. I’m not going to give them a gift when they hurt me.”

If you shackle yourself to resentment, it will be challenging to forgive or appreciate.



**You don’t feel like you have time to practice  
Aware Appreciation.**

If you’re thinking, “I can’t even imagine trying to move into a state of appreciation ... from where I am right now.”

I could respond, “Seriously? All it takes is 10 minutes. You’ve just experienced what is possible in 10 minutes!”

But, I won’t. That could be interpreted as shaming.

I realize it is easier to shift momentum with a facilitator. Still, even if it takes twice as long for the “do it yourself,” the benefits are astounding.

You will need to establish a new way of dealing with negative emotion and discomfort. And, that is likely to require some significant change on your part.

Change happens when the scales tip. When the pain associated with not changing becomes greater than the pain associated with

making a change, it's a "no brainer." You can wait until the wolf is knocking at the door ... or you can instigate the change as soon as you see the writing on the wall.

Change is inevitable so I suggest that you take control by being proactive!



**Your mood fluctuates with the breeze.**

If you are quick to anger or feel like your peace of mind can be easily stolen by things that are out of your control, practicing Aware Appreciation can put you back in the driver's seat.

**Intentionally moving into a state of appreciation can be used to steady your emotions.**

When you've got momentum going in the wrong direction, it's due to your thoughts. Thoughts drive emotions.

And, would you believe that emotions only last a few seconds?

When we experience an extended period of any emotion, we have reignited it repeatedly with consistent thoughts. The momentum of your thoughts has you stuck in an endless loop ... until you break the cycle.

You need to stage a "thought intervention." I demonstrated what that looks like.



When you start thinking about things that you appreciate rather than focusing on what you don't appreciate ... or things that you're angry, hurt, or sad about ... you're intentionally shifting your thoughts and that starts to build momentum in the right direction.

And as you continue building momentum with appreciation, the feeling that accompanies this mental state starts to impact your body as well. The brain begins to release different chemicals into your bloodstream. This is backed up by plenty of research related to the mind body connection.

Since our brain is running the show, it's important that we have at least a basic understand of how it works. And, how it drives human behavior. Our fluctuating emotions activate different parts of our brain. When we are in a state of appreciation, we have activated a different part of the brain than when we're in a state of anger, resentment, or fear.

It's our frontal lobe that allows us to make thoughtful decisions and choices. When you're in a state of appreciation, your frontal lobe is firing on all cylinders. You can see options and consider alternatives. It's this area of the brain that gives us impulse control.

When the frontal lobe is offline, life can get messy very quickly. This leaves the back of the brain or the mid brain in command. When we have allowed the momentum to build around a negative emotional state, our brain believes it needs to prepare to fight or flee.

This is the ancient part of the brain that is necessary for survival. We humans share it with every mammal. It's quite valuable when duty calls but we don't want it running the show most of the time.

Rather, we want to stay out of survival mode unless it's absolutely necessary ... as would be the case if you were being chased by a wild animal. In this case, it would be helpful to act quickly without much conscious thought or exerting personal will and power.

When you are feeling threatened ... as is the case when you're scared or angry, practicing Aware Appreciation allows you to move your brain activity forward to the frontal lobe. Now, you can think rationally.

You may still feel fear and anger but it won't be taking over. You can stop preparing to run or fight.



**You lack resilience.**

Fortunately, resilience can be learned. Of course, just like any other skill, it requires practice.

The practice exercises muscles that may not have been used much ... recently or ever. As the muscles develop, the skill builds.

When you find yourself in a challenging place ... which you will since no life is lived without its share of bumps and bruises, the skills we have developed and demonstrated will be easy to draw upon.

You may find yourself saying, “I hope this still works because I really need it today.”

Whatever you focus on grows. This is a universal law.

It doesn't matter whether it is something you would admit to wanting to attract into your life or not. A situation can only be “bad” if you say it's bad. Since nothing is all good or all bad, then you can find good in every situation.

If you condemn something or dwell on an encounter that you would have liked to see played out differently, you put energy into it. This is depleting your resilience.

Instead, let it go.

It's all in the way you look at things. One of my favorite words is ‘interesting’. Rather than judging something as good or bad, it is interesting. It's a fairly safe word if used with pure intention.



## **You are quick to judge ... yourself and others.**

If you live life with a zealous curiosity, you notice everything. You want to know the motivation behind someone's actions or reactions.

If you observe a person in reaction to their own circumstances and react with judgment rather than detached curiosity, you will be drawn into their web. The alternative is to find the actions of others interesting, without judging them. You can imagine that there are many facts that contribute to their decision-making process that you are unaware of.

Given all the facts and their unique circumstances, there is a good chance that you might act in a similar fashion. You might even react worse by your own standards.

In any kind of relationship, you are playing with fire if you expect someone to change. But expecting change isn't the riskiest aspect of relationship because you know people will change. Where you get into trouble is when you expect that they will change in the way that you would like to see them change. People change as they grow, but growth is a very personal thing.

You have no idea what journey another person's soul is on, and you have enough to deal with trying to manage your own. If you expect that someone is going to finally 'get it' and the result will be that they come into the person you have always known they could be, you are sure to be enlightened otherwise.

It can make life easier for both of you if you will consider the person that they are (and also are becoming) simply interesting. That will give you the opportunity to accept them just the way they are and appreciate what they contribute to your life.

**And the more appreciation you express, the more you will find to appreciate ... even when your original expectations are not met.**

OK. Maybe you're not quite ready to accept that last statement as fact. Let's continue exploring.



**You're not happy and haven't been for longer than you can recall.**

Happiness is a state of being. If you recall, I shared with you that you are in control of your emotional state. So, the good news is that anyone can create this state of being ... happy.

And, Aware Appreciation is a simple practice that will help you make the shift.



For many, work that isn't satisfying is mentioned as a source of discontent and an obstacle to happiness. We often think we need to leave this sort of "airy fairy" practice at home when we head to work.

**You can stop this "stinkin' thinkin'" right here. Consider this ...**

In an article titled, the "Top 6 Habits You Need for Success" number 6 suggests that you bring the "soft skills" from your personal life into your business life. (Aware Appreciation would be considered a soft skill.)

One of the world's best-known trends experts, Daniel Levine, believes that business trends and personal trends are merging in such a way that managers are distinguishing less between the two.

In his words, "The same traits that underpin success in our personal lives are crucial for success in the business realm.

Among these is being mindful." He describes this as "the ability to step outside oneself, look at the big picture, and stay conscious of what you are doing and why."

This is awareness. And, the message here is that mindfulness shouldn't just happen on a meditation cushion or in yoga class, but in meeting rooms and on calls with clients.

He goes on to say, "People are all too aware of the need to be mindful, what with all the memes and mantras shared, but it's

applying this knowledge effectively to their work life that they miss.”

And, most importantly, for someone contemplating taking up the practice of Aware Appreciation ...

Levine also talks about the importance of expressing gratitude. “There is a growing consciousness that focusing on the positive and expressing gratitude is an integral part of being happy.”

In your journey to success, gratitude helps you become more resilient—and when you’re more resilient, things like hurdles and haters are less likely to trip you up.

Now, we’ve just tied resilience and happiness together with a lovely bow made from Aware Appreciation.

**Awareness is applied mindfulness and when coupled with appreciation it’s a secret weapon for success.**



**You have health issues that you can't imagine appreciating.**

This is understandable. But, you’re not off the hook.

Rather than trying to overstretch to appreciate something that you’re just not happy about, focus on something that’s easy to appreciate.

Charlie shares my enthusiasm for practicing Aware Appreciation. Here's one of his examples.

He monitors his blood pressure at home. It is regularly extremely high. It defies logic. He is the picture of health.

He knew that people who have high blood pressure can lower it quickly with a bit of conscious effort. For those with this condition, blood pressure is variable where it is not for most people.

It had been a cause for concern (certainly not something to appreciate). When the blood pressure monitor indicated, once again, that it was high he decided to experiment with practicing Aware Appreciation.

He said, "I'm going to relax and focus on my appreciations while I'm testing my blood pressure. I'm curious to see what effect it has."

After just one minute of focusing on appreciations, his blood pressure returned to normal.

Charlie is as skeptical as they come. So, for him, this was physiological proof that Aware Appreciation works. Being in a state of appreciation literally lowered his blood pressure ... almost instantly.



## **You're in a challenging relationship.**

Studies tell us that the happiest humans are those that are in relationship. What they don't mention is that being in a challenging relationship can make happiness seem elusive at best.

Fortunately, practicing Aware Appreciation can help us improve our relationships too.

Let me share our experience.

We attended a workshop for couples that focused on improving intimacy. Charlie and I, just like any other couple, go through peaks and valleys. Sometimes our relationship is firing on all cylinders. At other times, we feel disconnected ... like two ships passing in the night.

One of the practices that the workshop leaders challenged us with uses appreciation to build intimacy and connection. It can work for any relationship but the challenge was to practice it with our significant other.

Every night before turning in, you share with each other 3 things you appreciate about the other person ... and about being in relationship with them.

Depending on the state of your relationship, finding 3 things to appreciate can be quite a challenge.

When I wasn't feeling particularly connected and we were trying to practice sharing 3 appreciations I might find myself stretching with, "I love the way you put your socks on."

That isn't what I actually said but I provide it as an example so that you can see that it can be that simple.

I shared my observations with the group. It was fascinating.

When I was challenging myself to find things I appreciate about my partner, it was impossible to feel disconnected. If I was feeling resentful, the feeling was squeezed out and replaced with warmth and understanding.

This transforms relationships ... even if you must practice it solo. As, you'll see with the Aware Appreciation Worksheet, you'll have an opportunity every day to pour appreciation into your relationships and let the practice demonstrate results.



**You're regularly expressing gratitude and it hasn't made much of a difference in your life.**

This does not come as a surprise when you understand the difference between gratitude and appreciation.



Being grateful makes us a socially acceptable human. Think about it.

We're expected to say, "Thank you." Most of us express gratitude many times a day. Fail to offer the obligatory "thank you" and we may find ourselves on trial for being impolite.

And, if we're not grateful for our blessings, we may be told we don't deserve them. Give thanks for what you have or it will be taken from you.

I'm not suggesting you discontinue your regular offers of thanks and gratitude. But I am suggesting that there is a difference between gratitude and appreciation.

With appreciation, my personal preferences are taken into consideration. And, when it's personal, it produces a different result for us.

For example, I can appreciate chocolate milk. I don't have to be grateful for chocolate milk.

We focus on appreciation because it expresses our individuality and activates positive emotions. This creates a cascade of benefits that extends to all areas of our lives.



**You haven't had much success trying to change a habit that doesn't serve you.**

Aware Appreciation produces the best results when it is practiced daily.

But this is true for any habit we want to encourage.

Why do we need a daily practice?

Creating new neural pathways in the brain requires a commitment to change. The change must be practiced with intensity, frequency, consistency and duration.

Humans tend to want instant gratification, but the brain does not rewire itself instantly. To heal the brain, any new habit should be practiced ... intensely, frequently, consistently and with duration.

What does this mean?

Intensity, as we're using it here, would mean using the Aware Appreciation Worksheet. Challenge yourself to find new things to appreciate every day. Stretch yourself. Review the examples we've given in this Quick Start Guide to inspire you.

Frequency requires that you practice the new habit regularly. You might even turn to the worksheet more often than once a

day when you find yourself creating thought momentum in a direction you're not wanting to pursue.

Consistency requires doing the same thing every time. You're creating a new, healthy neural pathway. The importance of having your worksheets handy cannot be emphasized enough.

**The worksheet can even be used as a distraction when you're feeling vulnerable.**

What do I mean by duration? Habits don't develop overnight. And, sustaining change isn't going to happen overnight, either.

It's going to take a while to establish new patterns in the brain. At some point, you'll find yourself turning to appreciation, in the most challenging of experiences, without thinking about it.

If you're wondering how long this will take. That's how you'll know you've developed a new habit ... it becomes automatic.

The good news is that the body is recreating itself in every moment. In a few months, the body will have made major progress towards creating the new neural pathways. This will make choosing to practice Aware Appreciation seem easier than choosing to build momentum around the old, destructive negative thought patterns.



**You don't know how to practice appreciation effectively.**

Fortunately for you, this is no longer a problem. You have this Aware Appreciation Quick Start Guide to make it easy to practice appreciation.

This is a practice that I use regularly. I've incorporated it into a Productivity Planner that I use on work days. The Planner has a section called Aware Appreciation.

Every morning when I plan what I will focus on for the day, I go through the questions you'll find on the Aware Appreciation Worksheet. It shifts my approach to the day.

These questions force me to think. I must focus. If I'm distracted, the practice is extremely frustrating. These questions are specific enough that they require my full attention.

The regular practice of appreciation can make even the most challenging situations feel manageable. The key is building your appreciation skills when you're not feeling overwhelmed.

Let's go back to the man who is in the midst of divorce. He could have left the office and quickly allowed the momentum to turn to negativity again. Or, he could choose to take the shift he made in the office and ride it ... keep it going to the point where he could sustain being in a more appreciative mindset.

**Awareness and appreciation are gifts that we give ourselves.**

Resentment, hostility, anger and frustration will eat you alive if you can't find a way to let them go. Playing the victim role will leave you feeling powerless.

There is always something you can find to appreciate that will create a positive shift in momentum for you.



**You're still not convinced.**

When you are challenged to find your way to appreciation, an inspiring story can be just the thing to provide some hope. This story, circulated far and wide via the Internet, is a perfect example.

Two traveling angels stopped to spend the night in the home of a wealthy family.

The family was rude and refused to let the angels stay in the mansion's guest room. Instead, the angels were given a small space in the cold basement.

As they made their bed on the hard floor, the older angel saw a hole in the wall and repaired it. When the younger angel asked why, the older angel replied, "Things aren't always what they seem."



The next night, the pair came to rest at the house of a poor, but very hospitable, farmer and his wife. After sharing what little food they had, the couple let the angels sleep in their bed where they could have a good night's rest.

When the sun came up the next morning, the angels found the farmer and his wife in tears. Their only cow, whose milk had been their sole source of income, lay dead in the field.

The younger angel was infuriated and asked the older angel, "How could you have let this happen? The first man had everything, yet you helped him," she accused. "The second family had little but was willing to share everything and you let the cow die."

"Things aren't always what they seem," the older angel replied. "When we stayed in the basement of the mansion, I noticed there was gold stored in that hole in the wall. Since the owner was so obsessed with greed and unwilling to share his good fortune, I sealed the wall so he wouldn't find it.

Then last night as we slept in the farmer's bed, the angel of death came for his wife. I gave him the cow instead. Things aren't always what they seem."

Keep this in mind when things don't turn out the way you want or the way you think they should. Every outcome is designed with your best interests in mind. You just might not see how that is true until some later time. When you can keep this perspective, it is much easier to practice Aware Appreciation, even in the face of challenges in your life.



**You're wondering what your next step should be.**

Your goal is to be appreciative in just about every moment of every day ... to be able to reach a state of appreciation on autopilot. As you begin to weave appreciation into all your actions and interactions, it gets easier if you find an entertaining ritual that helps you find things to appreciate regularly.

**The more you appreciate, the more you have to appreciate. That's what using the Aware Appreciation Worksheet will do for you.**

Every opportunity that you take to jump to appreciation chips away at the old subconscious programming that keeps you dipping into the same disappointing well. Each time you practice appreciation ... even for the small things that you are aware of in your life, you are training your subconscious to expect only things that you can appreciate. Ultimately, this creates what you expect. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy of monumental importance.

# Aware Appreciation

## Your Daily Practice

Answer these questions every day. There's extra "magical powers" in writing it down. So, print this form out and keep it handy.

Do your best to stretch by finding different things to appreciate every day. This practice will force you to pause and THINK!

What's One BIG Thing I Appreciate Today?


What Opportunity Am I Being Presented With?


Who Do I Appreciate Today? A Person or People


What Do I Appreciate, In Particular, Today?


What Goal Am I Pursuing? What Progress Have I Made?


What Insight Have I Received to Help Me Solve a Dilemma?

┌ — ┐  
|  
└ — ┘

What Do I Appreciate About My Health...Physical or Mental?

┌ — ┐  
|  
└ — ┘

What Resources Are Contributing to My Prosperity?

┌ — ┐  
|  
└ — ┘

What Am I Enthusiastic About Today?

┌ — ┐  
|  
└ — ┘

What Unique Person, Place or Thing Do I Appreciate Today?

┌ — ┐  
|  
└ — ┘

***Join us at [AwarenessAddicts.com](http://AwarenessAddicts.com) for regular support and information about coupling appreciation with awareness to create a “1 - 2 punch” for any obstacles in the way of your success.***