

GRATITUDE

by Graeme Kaponu Ulrich

As I was making my cup of coffee this morning I found myself spontaneously thanking the kettle for boiling the water for me. I didn't just say the words in my mind, I felt a genuine sense of appreciation. This reminded me of an exercise I did in a Huna workshop on Kauai many years ago where we took things like turning on a light switch and consciously acknowledging everyone and everything we could think of connected with that act. This exercise was about connection.

My thoughts went to the company who generated the power initially, but as I sat with the idea, the people who designed and made the switch, the people built the place I was in and installed the lights, the people who mined the copper and manufactured the wires, etc. began to come to mind. Even Michael Faraday and Nikola Tesla and others involved in inventing the technology started popping up into my mind.

Another version of that exercise, to do with prosperity, involved doing a *nalu* meditation (quiet contemplation) on an item of clothing and everyone and everything, particularly how much money that was involved in having that item of clothing available to wear. I extended that to include the benefits of having that clothing to wear. This then brought up all of the connections that came up in the light switch exercise as well.

The word *mahalo* is used for thank you in Hawaii. Thank you in English was originally recognised as a blessing, praise for something beneficial someone had done. *Mahalo* has similar meanings of admiration, praise, esteem, regards and appreciation. In breaking the word down to syllables we can get connotations of sharing an experience of life, breath and spirit. In some ways it is related to the word *aloha* which means love and joyful sharing.

Doing the exercises left me with a feeling of relaxing expansion, warmth and connection. It has become a habit now as I do things day-to-day to express gratitude consciously like thanking my computer and everything connected with it for making it possible to share these thoughts with everyone "out there", forming more and more connections. I even thanked my eyes, hands, brain and

every part of my body involved in the process, and every part of me that supported those parts on this occasion.

Initially I did this as a fully conscious process, going through and thinking of the connections until the feeling came but after a while just thanking the person or thing in front of me generated the feeling and I pause to acknowledge that. I still take time periodically to do the exercises to keep up the habit, especially if I notice the feeling isn't as intense as usual.

Expressing genuine gratitude leaves us with a real feeling of connection. Like so many things, if there is no good feeling associated with it in the moment, it's just saying thank you by rote and the genuine gratitude has fallen silent. If we can think of someone or something and that feeling wells up, perhaps even with a sigh of contentment, then we are genuinely feeling and expressing gratitude.

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