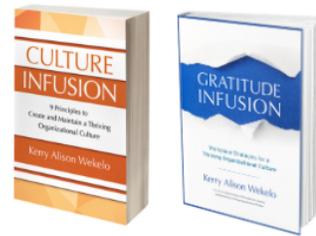




Practicing Effective Communication



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BY KERRY ALISON WEKELO

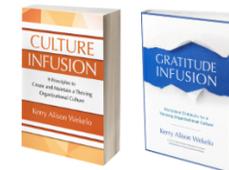
Principles for a Thriving Organizational Culture

Introduction



Kerry Wekelo,
Chief Operating Officer

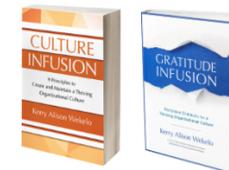
- ✦ Actualize Consulting is a **financial services consulting firm** with **offices in the US, UK, Canada, and Mexico**. We provide expertise to a **client base of 110+ Fortune 1000 clients**.
- ✦ Actualize Consulting has placed a **heavy focus on culture for the last 11 years**, with **two books serving as case studies** of the culture transformation.
- ✦ Won awards and less than 4% turnover in the last four years.



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Agenda

- ✦ Variables that **Affect Communication**
- ✦ **Mindfulness**
- ✦ Art of Listening
- ✦ **Handling Challenges**
- ✦ Effective Communication Strategies
- ✦ Use of **Gratitude**

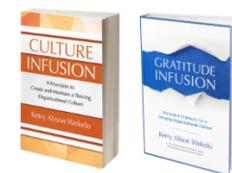


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Intention



**Reframing what it means to communicate,
providing you tips and strategies to better
handle all interactions.**



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worldgate WAY Values



W

Willing

I will be **willing** to do the work, strive for excellence, take on new initiatives, share my ideas, and admit when I am wrong.



O

Open Minded

I will be **open minded** to new ideas, new perspectives, and new strategies.



R

Responsive

I will be **responsive** to clients and team members.



L

Learner Mindset

I will consistently adopt a **learner mindset**, so that I can be the best for my clients, team, community and myself.



D

Diverse

I will respect **diversity** of race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and perspective, as that diversity, equity, and inclusion drives excellence.



G

Generous

I will be **generous** with my time, knowledge and compassion in the workplace. I will strive to be generous in the spirit of giving back to my community.



A

Accountable

I will be **accountable** for getting the job done in a timely and high-quality manner. I will continuously think about how things could be done better. I will admit when I am wrong and will be willing to make amends.



T

Thoughtful

I will be **thoughtful** in all that I do, from strategic, tactical and empathetic standpoints.



E

Ethical

I will always be **ethical**, conducting myself in accordance with the rules of law and standards of right conduct set forth by my employer and clients.



W

Welcoming

I will be **welcoming** to new ideas, new team members and new clients.



A

Adaptable

I will **adapt** and excel when priorities shift and strategies evolve.



Y

Yes... And...

I will **approach** every decision and opportunity curious about the possibilities. Rather than saying "yes...but," I will reframe to "yes...and."



worldgate
WAY



worldgate™

Change the Way You See Communication

- ✦ Communication is a **Two-Way Street**
- ✦ Communication is the **foundation** of every relationship and is essential **before conflict arises**.
 - ✦ Regardless of the intended message of the speaker, **the recipient is the one who interprets and assigns meaning** to the message conveyed.
- ✦ It is vital to **understand your audience**.



Willing

Be **willing** to learn and grow relationships with communication. Share your ideas and admit when you are wrong.

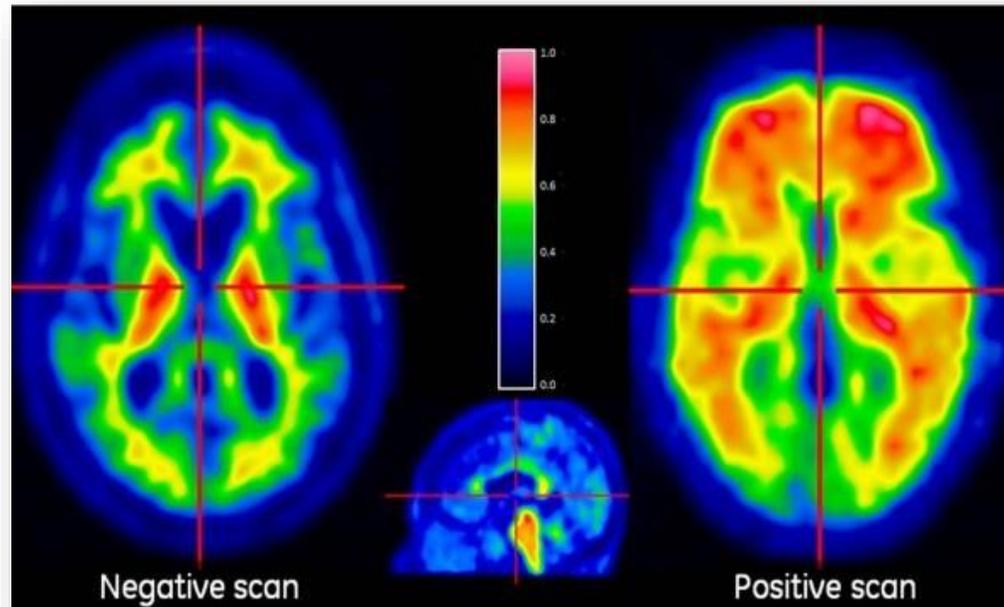


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The Power of Positive Thinking

Negative Thoughts

- ✦ Slow down brain coordination
- ✦ Make it difficult to process thoughts ... or find solutions
- ✦ Hinders creative ability
- ✦ Decreases activity in the cerebellum
- ✦ Impacts the left temporal lobe (fear factor), affecting mood, memory and impulse control



Positive Thoughts

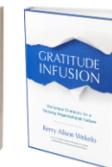
- ✦ Synapses (areas connecting neurons) increase dynamically
- ✦ Increases mental productivity by improving cognition
- ✦ Intensifies ability to pay attention, to focus
- ✦ Improves ability to think and analyze incoming data
- ✦ Improves ability to solve problems quicker and enhance creativity

Sources:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/prime-your-gray-cells/201108/happy-brain-happy-life>
<https://meteored.com/how-does-thinking-positive-thoughts-affect-neuroplasticity/>

Picture Source:

<https://lifewitharielle.com/tag/positive-thoughts/>



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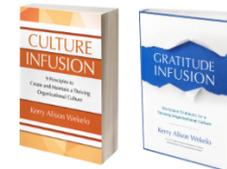
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Mindfulness – Before we React...



1. Is it true?
2. Is it kind?
3. Is it necessary?



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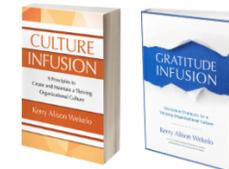
Reflection

The “Benefit of the Doubt”

- ✦ Reflect on a time you got irritated at something someone else did. Did you consider why they might be acting that way?
- ✦ Conversely, reflect on a time someone got irritated with you. What would someone see at face value?

Thoughtful

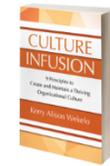
Strive to be **thoughtful** of others by being empathetic.



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Start by Listening

- ✦ **When we allow others to be heard, we are respecting their opinions, presence, and knowledge.**
- ✦ Be **welcoming** of others and their viewpoints.
- ✦ Listening signals, **“I value you.”**
- ✦ **Active listening** is the practice of not only *hearing* what is being said, but striving to understand the intended message.
- ✦ **Listening = Hearing**



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Active Listening: Part 1

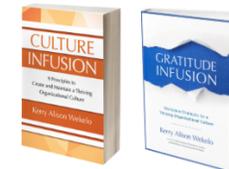
Listen

- ✦ **Practice Empathy:** Put yourself in someone else's shoes
- ✦ **Focus Attention:** Listen fully, limit distractions like phones
- ✦ **Show Listening:** Provide subtle responses, such as “yes” or “I understand.”
- ✦ **Suspend Judgement:** Resist making assumptions.
 - ✦ Allow the other to fully express before offering your opinions.



Open Minded

Keep an **Open Mind** to new perspectives, new ideas, and new strategies.



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Active Listening: Part 2

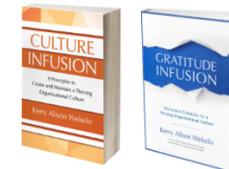
Verify



- ✦ **Be Responsive:** Provide direct responses – “tell me more...”
- ✦ **Ask Questions:** Ask questions to gather details
- ✦ **Verify Understanding:** Summarize what you heard
- ✦ **Be Open:** Be open to what the other has to say
- ✦ Do not make assumptions before verifying fully and openly

Adaptable

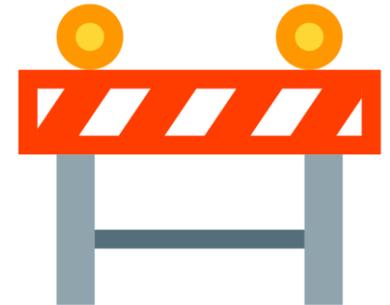
Adapt as you learn more about the subject at hand. Have priorities changed?



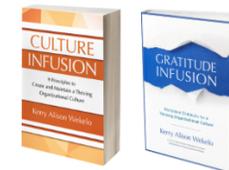
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Challenges – They're Inevitable

- ✦ No matter how good you are at communicating, there are a couple things that will get lost in translation – road blocks are a part of life. We aren't meant to agree with others on *everything*; **diversity** of opinion is essential to innovation.
- ✦ **View each challenge with others as a miscommunication** – not a problem
- ✦ **Take accountability** – each person involved has played a part in how things turned out
- ✦ Handle challenges as they come up, **try not to stew** on them and bring them up when they are no longer relevant



Use a **Learner Mindset** – how can you analyze the situation to be the best for your clients, your team, and your community?

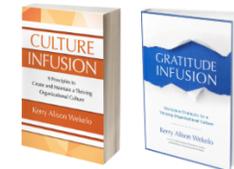


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Reflection

Communication

- ✦ **When was the last time you truly listened to what the other person was saying?**
- ✦ **When someone is talking, are you thinking about your response?**
- ✦ **How many times do you get off subject because of people's interjections?**



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Communication in Times of Conflict

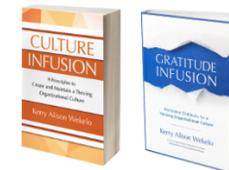
The first step when you are facing a challenge with another person is to take a moment to reflect.

WHAT IS MY ROLE IN THIS CHALLENGE?



Accountability

Keep yourself **accountable** – be willing to admit when you are wrong and make amends.

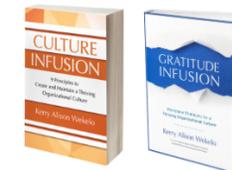
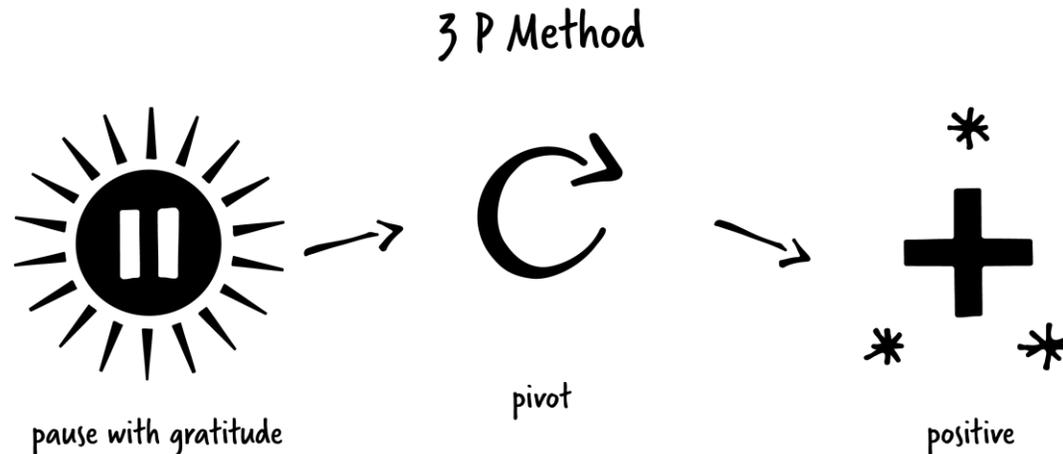


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3 P Method + Gratitude: Pause to Pivot to A Positive

- ✦ **3 P Method + Gratitude:** Pause to Pivot to A Positive
- ✦ My kids started a new school in the midst of the pandemic and struggled making friends while maintaining in-person rules of social distancing, masks, and socialization-free lunches. With no clubs or ways to meet people, my son felt he was “dying inside” from the lack of connection. I reminded him of the 3P Method and how to be grateful that we are healthy and fortunate despite the challenge.
- ✦ **Each time we face a negative feeling, it is a chance to pivot to more things you are grateful for.**



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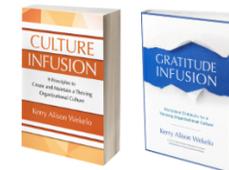
Yes, and...

Instead of negating someone else's idea with a "but," remember that both ideas can coexist peacefully. The next time someone comes to you with an idea that you might not understand, strive to collaborate to come up with a solution.

No, I have a different idea.

VS

**I hear your idea for the project, tell me more about it.
Once they respond, ask if they have thought about your way.**



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Yes, and...

Diversity

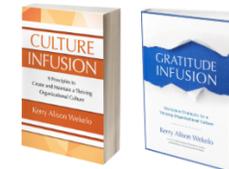
Inclusion drives excellence. Respect **diversity** of opinions and strive to collaborate.

Welcoming

Follow the rules of improv – be curious and **welcoming** of others and their ideas!

Yes, and...

Stay curious about the possibilities that come from different people and their opinions by saying **Yes, and...**



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Exercise for Your Team

For Challenges that Keep You Stuck

based on Watering the Flowers by
Thich Nhat Hanh

1. What are you grateful for about the person and this experience?
2. What have you contributed to the situation, and what would you have changed about your approach? (Take *accountability*.)
3. How did the situation make you feel?
4. How would you like to move forward in a positive light, and what will you commit to going forward



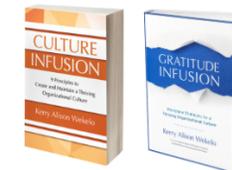
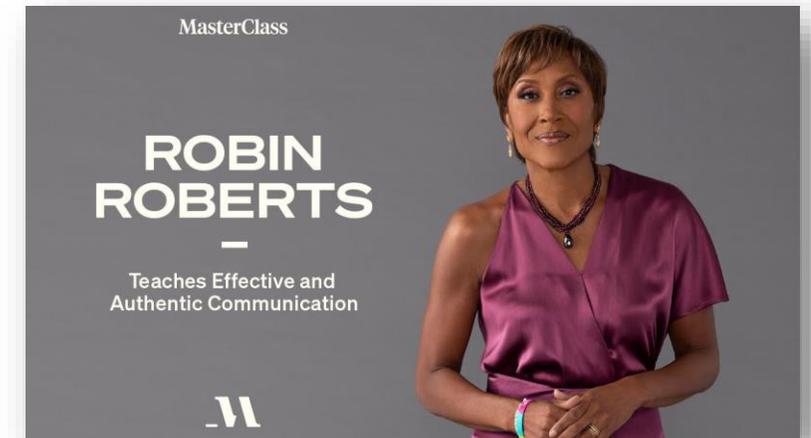
Responsive

Be **responsive** to the feedback you receive from clients and team members to **adapt** accordingly.

Communication Tips

Inspired by Robin Roberts

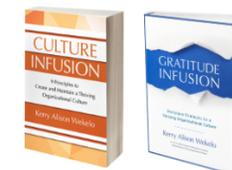
- ✦ Choose to be optimistic and see the good in every situation
- ✦ No matter your line of work, you will need to communicate effectively
- ✦ Lean in and ensure the person you are communicating with knows you see them and want to know what they have to say
- ✦ Be authentic and real in all communication
- ✦ Nothing replaces human connection... call instead of texting, video chat instead of calling, and strive to be in-person as you can (granted, this is not easy or recommended in the pandemic)



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Communication Types

- ✦ Each step we take away from in-person communication, we leave more room for misunderstandings from the lack of body language, tone, demeanor, etc.
- ✦ Let's look at how to best utilize each form of communication to keep misunderstandings to a minimum.



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What type of communication is best?

IM

- ✦ Used for short messages needing a quick response. Since messages are quick, this is an easy way to miscommunicate.
- ✦ Personally, I like for my team to IM me before calling to ask if I am available.

Email

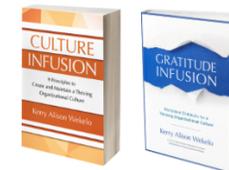
- ✦ Used to communicate longer tasks that might need clear instructions that someone can reference often.
- ✦ Since emails are completely text-based, tone and intended meaning may still be misconstrued. For example, jokes over a text-medium are likely to fall flat... or even come across wrong.

Phone call

- ✦ Used for longer-winded explanations of tasks and can be used in conjunction with screensharing.
- ✦ A good way to provide feedback so tone and inflection can be heard.

Video Call

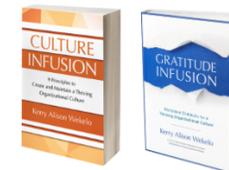
- ✦ Closest thing to in-person communication – meaning it has the highest chance of intended message being properly understood.
- ✦ Best route for giving feedback.



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Email Communication Tips

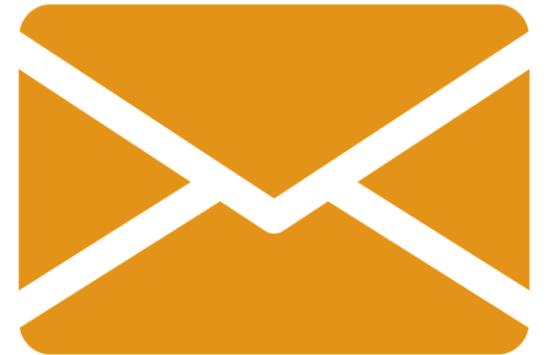
- ✦ Your recipients likely receive multiple emails in one day. To be **clear and concise**:
 - ✦ **Use the subject line** to clearly introduce the topic of your note. This also helps when people scan or search their inbox for key words and makes it easier for them to find.
 - ✦ Write in **inverted pyramid form** with the most important information at the top.
 - ✦ **Use bullets** for easy-to-read lists
 - ✦ **Underline and bold** important dates for emphasis



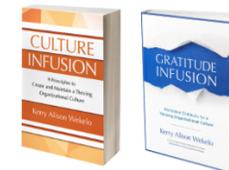
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Email Communication Tips

- ✦ Think carefully about how your tone will be received. One of the benefits of email is that it gives both the sender and receiver time to polish their thoughts before a response.
- ✦ Make note of your audience – how will they receive the message?
 - ✦ If giving feedback, is it light or direct? What does the receiver prefer
 - ✦ If making a joke, can you be sure that the receiver will understand?



Be **ethical**: Never send an email when you are upset – take a moment to pause and collect your thoughts. You can even draft it and come back to it later in a fresh head space.



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Email Communication Tips

- ✦ Fortify your subject line
 - ✦ If you need a response, add a qualifier like “Action Required” or “Please complete by ____”
- ✦ Make sure your recipient has a clear understanding of what is expected.
 - ✦ Repeat your intent if necessary
- ✦ Err on the side of caution, especially if you do not personally know the recipient.



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Consolidation of Information

Out of Office

- ✦ Start an email when the person is out of the office and add to it, versus multiple emails.

Daily Action Email

- ✦ Utilize a consolidated action list for those on your team.

Check Who is on the Email Chain

- ✦ Ensure the correct people are on the email list.



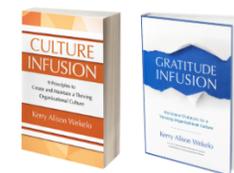
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Stay Grateful

- ✦ Gratitude relies on the **brain networks associated with social bonding and stress relief**, leading to health benefits over time. For example, a more relaxed body state and lowered stress to wash over us.” (Glenn Fox)
- ✦ Gratitude is related to **23 percent lower levels of stress hormones. Dietary fat intake is reduced by as much as 25 percent** when people keep a gratitude journal, and gratitude is related to a **10 percent improvement in sleep quality** in patients with chronic pain.” (Robert Emmons)
- ✦ Gratitude **increases self-esteem, enhances willpower, strengthens relationships, deepens spirituality, boosts creativity, and improves academic performance.** (Robert Emmons)



1. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_can_the_brain_reveal_about_gratitude
2. Emmons, R. A., and M. E. McCullough. (2004). *The Psychology of Gratitude*. New York: Oxford University Press.



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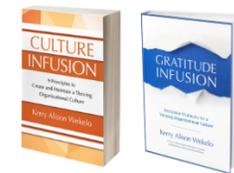
Sharing Gratitude

- ✦ Expressing gratitude **doesn't need to be a grand gesture.**
- ✦ Providing examples of why you are grateful strengthens the connection you feel with your personal gratitude.
- ✦ Not everyone in your organization will immediately get on the bandwagon of gratitude. As your teams start to **feel the positive impact**, their reluctance will fade.



Generous

Strive to be **generous** with compassion in the workplace – share your gratitude regularly.



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An Exercise in Personal Gratitude



CULTURE INFUSION

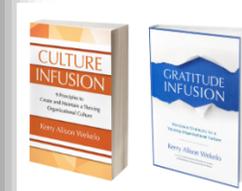
INTERNAL, EXTERNAL, WINS

An Exercise in Gratitude

Share one inward piece of gratitude (what you are grateful for about yourself), one outward piece of gratitude (others or things we are grateful for), and any wins experienced during the week.

For example, today I am grateful:

- for my internal team (outward)
- for leading by example (inward)
- winning a new project



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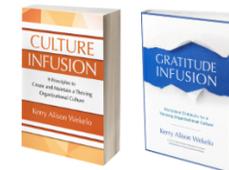
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Challenge

Spread Gratitude Outward

- ✦ **Take 2 minutes to list or journal everything you are grateful for. Keep going even when you think you have run out of things to mention**
- ✦ **Notice your mood – how has staying positive affected your demeanor?**



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Reflection

Gratitude

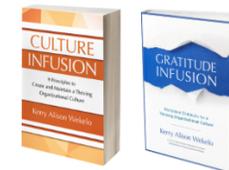
- ✦ **What are you grateful for today?**
- ✦ **What is a recent story in which you felt grateful?**



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Moving Forward Positively

- ✦ The goal of all corporate communication should be to move forward positively, whether it is in times of challenges or in the day-to-day grind.

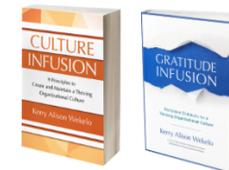


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