

Appreciativeness

Appreciation is the act of valuing something or someone. I can appreciate a ride in the country, when I am stale, or a Subway sandwich, after a morning's work. I can appreciate the paintings in the Medici Chapel, when I'm in the mood. Appreciation of people can be the easiest—and the hardest—thing. I can appreciate Mary Lou for remembering my birthday all these years, but I don't exactly appreciate it when my doctor says 'well I'll give you a few more years.'

Examples

1 Greetings

I appreciate a friendly greeting in the morning. I like for my wife to say something funny to me when I wake up. When I go to the track, I appreciate a good natured hi from Scott the custodian. There is one grumpy coach at the gym, who walks right past me and gets on the stair master without saying a word to me, then when he has finished wipes the machine and walks away without a word. I do not appreciate this behavior. It gets under my skin. It should not. He is a big boy and has the right to behave as he likes. But I seem unable to remain indifferent to his behavior. It's as though there's an unwritten social law that we should support one another by good nature. When I ask how you're feeling, I can deal with 'not too bad,' but not with 'rotten.'

2 Fine meal

I appreciate the care that goes into preparing a fine meal. When my wife prepares dinner she comprehends the whole challenge—from initial conception in her mind to eye appeal on the plate, to careful spicing, to portion size. In itself all this is an act of practical imagination as demanding as constructing a table. Then she must coordinate the cooking times required for each item—the water boiling for pasta, the string beans parboiled before serving, the baked potatoes crispy skinned but not tough. At the same time she will be constructing a salad, which is in itself a complex assignment; starting with a base of lettuce and chopped carrots, adding anchovies, capers, raisins, unsalted peanuts, rice vinegar, and soya oil, all apportioned by instinctive measures won from a lifetime's experience.