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GRATEFUL

In college and just twenty years old, I was lucky to have been recruited into Vector/Cutco, a marketing company with a heavy emphasis on personal growth. Through one of their summer conferences, I was exposed to the idea of gratitude.

At the time I was pretty resistant to any sort of personal growth and what it entails. At the age of twenty-two, however, I started to listen to self-motivational CDs and cassettes. (I know--when was the last time you listened to a cassette tape?) As a result, I became aware of the idea that one's income and fulfillment will rarely exceed one's level of personal growth. I knew I wanted to grow my physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual life, but what is the point in having an amazing family, making tons of money, and possessing savings, cars, homes, etc., if I never felt grateful for the life I live?

The lyrics in the first verse reflect the start of my actual gratitude journey:

**There came a time in my life
When I knew I had to try
And open up my eyes
It seemed so simple to me
Why such a struggle to be
My own insecurities
Creeping up on me.**

Practicing gratitude is similar to eating healthy; we know it is good for us yet we still resist doing so. The song becomes a musical affirmation reminding me to think about what I am grateful for each time I hear the track.

When I was thirty, I read a book called *The Magic of Thinking Big* by Dr. David Schwartz. In the book, Schwartz asks readers to do a gratitude exercise, for example, enumerating the people, places, or opportunities they are thankful for. Right then I started to practice gratitude and have ever since. I started writing a few comments every night about what I was grateful for and that soon turned into five to ten comments before I went to bed. Now I go to bed and wake up feeling deeply appreciative for the life I get to live. The practice of gratitude, especially on the most challenging of days, brings me to a place of appreciation for the people in my life, my environment, and for the opportunities that lie ahead. This practice also allows me to appreciate myself because each day I write something about myself for which I feel gratitude.

In the introduction of this book, I talked about the important role that questions play in our lives. The practice of gratitude starts with one simple question and I present this question as the chorus of this song:

**What am I grateful for?
I think about the little things
What am I grateful for?
So many simple things.**

When we ask *What am I grateful for*, instantly our brains start to formulate answers. When we take the time to write these answers down, we become more closely connected to what is already great in our lives--family, pets, sunsets, clean water, good health, shelter, an optimistic view of the world. The list is endless.

Before I ask you to think about what you are grateful for, I want to tell you a quick story about the second verse. My friend Kosha Dillz is an amazing rapper who lives in Los Angeles. During the production of this song, he stopped by the studio and laid down this verse:

**Woke up with a stretch and a yawn
So darn tired gotta mow this lawn
Gotta call my mom, go to the studio
A couple hours out gotta write this song
Could be worse if I was fighting a war
Dying from a disease with no real cure
Homeless on the streets so cold and poor
And I'm here complaining about all these chores
What am I so grateful for, I gotta write it down
So that it makes some sense
About having a job, paying some rent
Food on the table, respect for all my ladies and gents
Speaking in languages, taking it in
Surfing waves in the sunshine and catching a tan
Clean clothes on my back and a couple of raps
My family and kit kats how about that.**

The best part is he wrote this verse in one hour! Kosha reminds me to be grateful for the little things that are so easy to take for granted.

This track has reached way beyond what I ever imagined, bringing families and friends together all over the world. It will continue to be my mantra as I move through life's adventures. My highest hope for this song is that you are inspired to think about all you have to be grateful for in your life.

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