



Straight from the Director's Pen: The Gratitude Challenge

The Attitude of Gratitude: in 12 step groups, this topic is often greeted with resentment when it is brought up for discussion. As strange as it may seem, people often wish to remain planted within their world of pain, problems, and drama. When we are most in need of being grateful, is typically the time when it is the hardest for us to find anything to be grateful for. It is much easier to remain stuck in the limited and well-known limits of the "woe is me" perspective. Since it is well-known, it is also a comfortable place to be so we find ourselves stuck looking at how bad everything is. It is an uncomfortable intrusion to try and think of (let alone mention) even one thing that could possibly be counted as a blessing, a gift, or a simple act for which we could give thanks. We much prefer being held within the torment of our own perspectives and not being required or able to see things from a different angle. However, during those times when it appears to be the most difficult to see the good in any thing, any situation, or in any one person; this is when it is most critical and most valuable for us to practice the art of thankfulness. In other words, when we feel the worst, we need to find something, anything to be grateful for. Be sincere about that one thing. Don't just toss out something without pondering it first. We need to allow ourselves to be invested in a true, real, and honest thing, however small it may appear, and to be grateful.

Try it when you are at your lowest. You will find that your own mind will resist this. Your mind may speak to you and tell you that this is ridiculous because you have more important things going on in your life right now which need your attention. After all, you have real problems. Still, in the midst of the chaos of life, take a break for just a short moment. Give yourself permission to find just one thing in your life for which you can be truly grateful. Miracles are born of this. The miracle of a change in perspective. If you can get out of your own head long enough to change your perspective, to change the direction you are heading, even for a moment, you will find that peace will come. The miracle of peace. It may only last for a short time. Maybe just a second or two; but, within that moment you will be able to recognize that not all is drama, not all is pain. When life is happening, which it will and it does; when life is screaming all of its difficulties into your mind, then I challenge you to stop, to take a moment, and be grateful for just one thing. Give it a shot. It's simple but I didn't say it is easy.

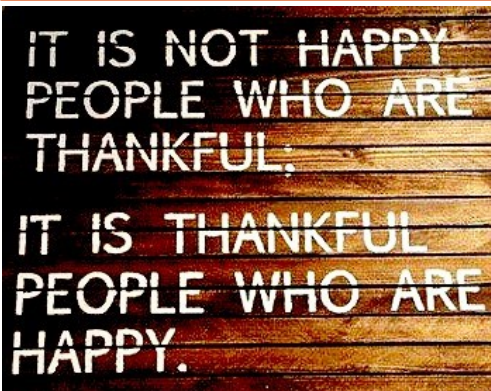
Happy Thanksgiving! Rene' Shaw

A Chinese Proverb to Ponder

A farmer and his son had a beloved stallion who helped the family earn a living. One day, the horse ran away and their neighbors exclaimed, "Your horse ran away, what terrible luck!" The farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see." A few days later, the horse returned home, leading a few wild mares back to the farm as well. The neighbors shouted out, "Your horse has returned, and brought several horses home with him. What great luck!" The farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see."

Later that week, the farmer's son was trying to break one of the mares and she threw him to the ground, breaking his leg. The villagers cried, "Your son broke his leg, what terrible luck!" The farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see." A few weeks later, soldiers from the national army marched through town, recruiting all the able-bodied boys for the army. They did not take the farmer's son because of his injury. Friends shouted, "Your boy is spared, what tremendous luck!" To which the farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see."

The moral of this story is that no event, in and of itself, can truly be judged as good or bad, lucky or unlucky, fortunate or unfortunate, but that only time will tell the whole story. The wiser thing, then, is to live life in moderation, keeping as even a temperament as possible, taking all things in stride, whether they originally appear to be 'good' or 'bad.' Life is much more comfortable and comforting if we merely accept what we're given and make the best of our life circumstances rather than always having to pass judgement on things and declare them as good or bad, it would be better to just sit back and say, "It will be interesting to see what happens."



Did You Know...

- Frazee, MN, is the turkey capital of US and boasts the world's largest man-made turkey—a fiberglass turkey weighing 3 tons and standing 22 feet tall
- On Thanksgiving day Americans eat approximately 690 million pounds of turkey which is equal to the weight of the entire population of Singapore
- The first Thanksgiving took three days to eat
- The average American eats enough on Thanksgiving Day to gain 1.3 pounds
- According to the polls, Thanksgiving is American's second favorite holiday only outranked by Christmas with Halloween coming in as a far third
- The iconic Snoopy & Woodstock balloon seen in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade has been in more parades than any other balloon in history

The Sharing Branches

This past month we introduced The Sharing Branches wall in the lobby of 203. We are super excited about the future opportunities this wall is going to give all of us to share, grow, reflect, and change.

For the month of November, we would like all of you to fill the board with things to be thankful for. There are some blank papers/cards/notes.... On the table in front of the wall. Please take at least one (but you can do as many as you'd like) and write one thing on it that you are thankful for. Don't worry if it's a duplicate of something already up there. Then drop the paper in the basket on the table to be hung up later. Wouldn't it be awesome to have so many pieces of paper to hang up that they won't all fit on the cork board?!



"When you think things are bad,
when you feel sour and blue,
when you start to get mad...
you should do what I do...
Just tell yourself, Duckie,
you're really quite lucky!
Some people are much more...
oh, ever so much more...
oh, muchly much-much more
unlucky than you!"

-Dr. Seuss



If you have
nothing to be
grateful for,
check your pulse.



Life Kinda Sucks

Some of you know this about me and some of you don't, but I grew up as a pastor's kid. My dad (Vic Walter) was a pastor, his dad was a pastor, his dad was a pastor, his dad was a pastor...you get the idea. What can I say? I was pretty much doomed to be a brainless, religious do-gooder, but thankfully Walters are non-conformists and don't like to run with the crowd. If there's an alternate path to take or a different way to think about things, you'll find a bunch of chubby Walters in line ahead of you jockeying to be the first radical in the group.

I know that everyone has heard this whether or not they grew up in a church setting or not, but given my family background it was something I heard so often that it became almost meaningless—in everything give thanks. This is one of the mantras that comes from the Bible. Whatever. There have been (and undoubtedly will be) many days in my life when I would give almost anything I had to meet the idiot who penned that phrase and slug him a good one. I do not have the kind of luck that leads to the kind of life where everything is soft kitties, easy choices, and cashmere sweaters. My luck tends to run much more along the lines of Murphy's law—Anything that can go wrong will go wrong.

I've had my share of trials and troubles, heartaches and tragedies. I was bullied as a child in school, I have had friends that stabbed me in the back, I have known personal betrayal, I have had two failed marriages, I had a son who was taken away from me for a time, I was a single parent for two very strong-willed children, I have had loved ones who have died, I have experienced loneliness, I have had dark days and dark thoughts, I could go on, but I don't think I will. I say all that to show that I know exactly how ridiculous it is to tell someone to be grateful or to be thankful, let alone to tell someone to be thankful all the time, no matter what. The honest truth is that life kinda sucks. But...

I have to admit, there are still things to be grateful for. Somehow we think that to be thankful, it has to be for something big like a new car, a fancy house, a great marriage, a fat bank account, but gratefulness is so much deeper than that. Gratefulness lives and breathes in the little, ordinary, every-day blessings of life—sunshine or rain, breathing, tasting, hearing, experiencing the world around and in us. To be grateful means to be warmly or deeply appreciative; or something that is very agreeable, welcome, or refreshing. A cool breeze on a hot day. A glimpse of a rainbow on a rainy day. There are a megakazillion (yes, that's a real number) things to be grateful for.

If you still don't think you have anything to be grateful for, start with the little, obvious, even ridiculous things. For example, be grateful you got out of bed this morning—you could have fallen out, hit your head, and broken your nose. Be thankful you had two matching shoes to put on (believe it or not, there are days when I get to work and realize that I should just be thankful I have shoes, forget that whole two matching thing). Be thankful your front door opened when you went to leave the house—imagine how embarrassing it would have been to call the fire department because your front door wouldn't open.

As you are grateful for the little things, you begin to be able to put some of the bigger things into the gratitude perspective. So, like the article on the front of this page says, it can be beneficial to take a moment and focus on one small thing and be warmly appreciative, refreshed, thankful.

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