

Continuing to cultivate an attitude of gratitude

It's the day after Thanksgiving, that annual American ritual of feasting with family and friends around a table laden with ritual food like turkey and cranberry sauce, and maybe some not so ritual foods, like the spinach soufflé side dish that is part of my own family tradition. Perhaps on this Friday, you are feeling extra tired from all those preparations and the combination of joy and strain that having friends and family members underfoot can cause. Do we still have to be thankful with all those pots and pans yet to clean up?

The answer is decidedly, "yes." We have so much to be grateful for in the United States. It is true that the unemployment rate has been hovering at nearly 10% for a year, but that still means 90% of us are currently employed. If we have a job in these tough economic times, we need to celebrate the fact of our paycheck or that we have clients who pay us. Even if you feel, "It's not much of a job, really," because you are shelving books at the library with your college degree. Even if the workweek is stressful. Even if you are bored during your time at work.

Instead of complaining about work, immediately counter your negative statement with one something you are grateful for at work. Perhaps you have health care through your employer. Perhaps you have a boss that actually says thank you for a job well done. Perhaps you have friends you would never have met except for the work you currently do. We need to be grateful for all that we do have. Not just on Thanksgiving, but every day of our lives.

Americans take so much for granted: a system of laws that are predictable; free elections with a governmental system that puts the brakes on a true dictatorship; walking down our streets without wondering if we will be stopped and thrown in jail for no apparent reason; and the right to pursue work, with the opportunity to actually create our own companies or sell our own products for profit. Plenty of people around the world would trade places with us in a second.

Consider this if you are having difficulty counting your blessings:

- Think about the fact that over 3 billion people on the planet live on less than \$2.00 per day;
- If you make the US minimum wage, you are in the 12% of the richest people on the planet;
- If you can read this, you have a skill that nearly 1 billion people on the planet do not have;
- Of the 6.5 billion people on the planet, only a handful had a chance to complete college. In fact, because universal free education is not a right everywhere else on the planet, 20% of children around the world won't ever go to school), because there is none available in their community or their family is too poor to pay for their education.

(All statistics drawn from *Dr. Charles Alonzo Peters of MochaMoney.com*) I recommend reading Greg Mortenson's *Three Cups of Tea* for an enlightening tale of building schools in remote regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan to feel grateful for the US public education system despite its many problems.

If you are in the roughly 10% unemployed, there are still many things for which you can cultivate an attitude of gratitude. Keep in mind that Americans have a firm belief in giving people second chances, and will always root for the comeback kid. Remind yourself that true gratitude is a mindset of thankfulness and joy for the wonderful blessings in our lives. If you have a car that works, be happy it's still running. If you have a roof over your head, and a warm place to sleep, it's a blessing. Don't waste your time dwelling on what you do not have. Appreciate your family, friends and the love you have in your life. Celebrate your health. Recognize the beauty all around us in the natural world. If you live in the United States, you have won the economic lottery in comparison to the rest of the world.

One thing you can count on in this life is that whatever your situation is now, it will change. Cultivating an attitude of gratitude for what you do have will help you when times are rough, *and* when times are smooth. As well as helping yourself, your attitude can positively touch the lives of those around you. Speaking in the capacity of a career coach, when you are happy and joyous and grateful for all you do have, it's contagious. You may just catch the eye of someone interested in taking you off the unemployment list.

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