

What Does It Mean To Be Grateful?

By Shasta Nelson

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Last week, *Thank You Power*, written by Deborah Norville, an author and anchor for Inside Edition, made it to the New York Best Seller List. Timely, with Thanksgiving coming up. But significant, as all our clients are searching for more fulfillment, happiness and peace.

Bringing together behavioral and psychological research, she shows how to enhance your life where you'll exercise more, be more creative, bounce back more quickly from adversity, have a higher immune response, live longer, be better liked by others, and have more creativity in solving problems. Each of these outcomes is backed up by published research. The one factor that impacts them all? Gratitude.

It sounds so cliché and too simple. But the truth is that gratitude is heralded by all ancient religions and spiritual gurus as being one of the most decisive dynamics in our joy experience. In Christian Scripture, Paul, who was thrown into every life transition possible at one time, said that it is precisely when we have troubles that it is most important to show gratitude for that act is what produces perseverance in us, which strengthens our character and ultimately leads to hope. And isn't hope what we all crave the most?

Being grateful doesn't deny that there is pain. It doesn't ignore that we have confusion. It doesn't negate our fear. It doesn't cover up that we are stressed. It's not meant to guilt people into trying to pretend happiness. It doesn't even fix everything and give us the perfect life.

But it does give us strength. And hope. And the ability to keep moving forward. And as we step into the chaos of family, events, memories, expectations, relationships and decisions this holiday season-- we could use a little more strength. A little more joy. A little more peace. A little more hope.

An Exercise on Gratitude:

Write down 10 things you're thankful for. Most likely your list will have the "obvious" on it. Now make a second list of ten more things. And then do it one more time to round off your list at thirty.

Did it get harder? Or easier? What insights do you see as you look back over that list? Are there any surprises on the list? How many of those things cost money? How do you feel when you look it over?