

## The Circle of Gratitude

Thanksgiving every November centers on turkey, travel, the pre-Christmas rush, football, family and eating too much rich, tasty food. Somewhere in all of that the idea of gratitude – thankfulness – is slipped in.

A lot has been written about the power of gratitude and about how it's a good policy to follow. If you think about your own life, even if it is not exactly the way you want it to be, it's still pretty good. There is much to appreciate and be thankful for.

We all have people who pop into our lives that do us a service, a good deed, a kindness - that we never thank. They can bless and infuse us with hope, grace or love in wonderful ways. We cannot always thank these individuals. Either we don't have the opportunity or we don't see the value of what is being given at the time.

Below are stories about three people I never thanked who made a tremendous difference in my life. As you read this I am sure you will see that you have had similar people in your own lives that you never got to thank - and there are probably people you have blessed who have never directly thanked you. When we cannot give thanks we can always help someone out down the road. The circle of gratitude completes itself in its own unique way.

### Thanks for a Smile

Sometimes a person or event breaks a state of mind or changes our emotions. It is easy to get lost in our own private little world until someone comes along and presents another viewpoint.

My parents and I were driving our old Pontiac across the interstate highway. I was probably 8 or 9 years old. As usual I sat in the back seat, staring out of the window, lost in my own thoughts as the landscape whipped by. My parents have told me that I used to be able to sit quietly for hours in the car and they would often check the backseat to see if I was still there. On this particular day a Greyhound passenger bus appeared and slowly came into the lane right next to

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us, gradually creeping up until it began to match our exact speed. I could clearly see the bus driver and also the passenger in the first seat, a distinguished, older black man with white hair and a matching beard, dressed in a grayish suit and holding a cane. As we made eye contact the man in the front seat began to smile and shake his head wildly as if he disapproved of something.

At first, I just stared at him, my mind not registering what was happening. I tried to look around, thinking that he was motioning to someone else, but there was only me. Slowly I cracked a smile as he continued. His mock indignation was making me lighten up. He continued to make faces at me, shake his head, and even excitedly brandish his cane. I guess I had looked too glum in the back seat?

After ten minutes we turned off the highway. I waved goodbye to my friend on the bus and wished him well as he dropped out of sight. The memory of him consistently comes back to me. He brightened my world and changed me by being a little silly. Sometimes I catch myself emulating him by making funny faces at little children who seem too serious.

### **Thanks for Being Honest**

There have been periods on my spiritual path where I would seek to absorb a tremendous amount of esoteric information. The desire to spiritually grow created an obsession from time to time with books and knowledge that offered pathways to expand my awareness.

One afternoon I visited my local New Age bookstore, combing the aisles and excitedly choosing several interesting books. When I had had my fill I decided to be witty as I left. I walked to the front of the store, plopped down my large stack of books on the checkout counter, and dramatically asked the cashier, "If I don't become enlightened after reading these books, do I get my money back?" As we both began to smile in unison we were abruptly interrupted by the thick, gruff voice of a German man who was in a nearby aisle. "When you do what the books say, then you'll be enlightened!" he gruffly – and loudly – admonished me. His booming voice was so stern that everyone in the store turned to look at him.

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Caught by surprise, I had no comeback. My humorous intent was totally punctured by this unwelcome and unexpected comment. Why was he listening in on our conversation anyway, I thought to myself? Without another word I quietly paid for my books and left the store. I was a little irritated that I had been interrupted by the stranger. It was true that I did read a lot of books, that I did think about these spiritual ideas a great deal, but I also felt that I did act upon the information I absorbed. His words, "When you do what the books say, then you'll be enlightened!" kept ringing out repeatedly in my mind like a mantra for days, weeks and months.

Years later, when I began teaching spiritual development classes, I encountered many people who were very educated about spiritual and self-help ideas but who did not take much action upon them. It was sort of a mental game they played. The main idea is that what you think creates your reality. People would talk about affirmations, staying positive and other mental strategies to get good things to magically manifest. While I believe this concept to be true in many respects, I also know that actions are a very important part of the creation process; belief and action work together to create your life.

I often think back to that gruff man, "When you do what the books say, then you'll be enlightened!" I appreciate his blunt reminder more and more. It was true. He had blessed me with that little kick in the pants. Whenever I get too lost in my thoughts about my life I ask myself what action can I take to support the life that I prefer to live? Enlightenment is not just an idea - it is a set of actions. If we are honest about the spiritual search then enlightenment becomes a verb, not an abstract, mental idea.

### **Thanks for Teaching Me**

Some of the simplest things we have are miraculous if you look at them that way. I notice that many people are restless to get ahead, get more stuff, or fill their lives with new things that they think will offer happiness and fulfillment. It is easy to overlook the good that we have right now, all the wealth we possess already.

I had trouble learning to read in elementary school. I cannot remember what the exact problem was, but I recall that one of my

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first grade teachers, Mrs. Robinson, took me aside and worked with me privately. She sat patiently with me as I sounded out the words and made me read book after book. She sent me home with books and I learned fast. I quickly caught up to the other children in my class.

I cannot imagine what might life would be like without this wonderful ability that we can take for granted. I would not be able to write this article and you would not be able to make sense of it without the power to read. I love books and reading has allowed me to stretch my imagination, learn and grow. Did I ever thank Mrs. Robinson? I cannot remember. I hope I did in some way show appreciation. Maybe her seeing me learning to read better was her reward? When I now help other people in some way I feel I am completing the circle of what Mrs. Robinson taught me – to be of assistance, to help people grow.

Blessings don't always come in the form we expect. Disappointment can lead to fulfillment, tragedy can lead to wisdom, and discomfort can bring about inner peace. A random stranger can bring good into your life in an instant. Take a moment and think about all the people who have given to you in some way. Every day is a new opportunity to go out and complete the circle of gratitude by giving thanks and blessing others in your own unique way.

## **About the Author**

Egan Sanders is an Intuitive Counselor, Coach and Spiritual Development Teacher who helps people accelerate their personal and spiritual growth, and experience greater happiness, clarity and fulfillment. Egan also assists Holistic Practitioners to increase their income, transform challenges, and be more effective in their work.

Egan is the author of the free report, "25 Ways to Clear Blockages to Well-Being" which is available at his website ([www.egansanders.com](http://www.egansanders.com)). Egan also offers inspiring and practical information in his two newsletters. Healing the Hologram is a quarterly newsletter dedicated to assisting holistic practitioners to succeed, ([www.egansanders.com/practitioners.html](http://www.egansanders.com/practitioners.html)). Path of Joy is a monthly newsletter for those traveling the road of Personal and Spiritual Growth, ([www.egansanders.com/growth.html](http://www.egansanders.com/growth.html).)

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