

May9

Gratitude

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Ah, gratitude. I've written about this before. Often, and – I think – recently. So recently, that I've wondered if I should bypass this word, this time. But, I just recently finished my A to Z blog-writing challenge, and returned to my long list based on the Table of Contents in David Whyte's book, *Consolations*. It's too early to start changing the plan. So, gratitude.

I have, finally, thoroughly embraced a daily gratitude practice. I write, every single day, a list of things that I am thankful for. The habit alone makes me happy. I have, for most of my life, traveled through my days by the seat of my pants, ad-libbing everything from waking and sleeping times to whether the dishes would get done, or pile up in the sink. I've lately embraced habit as a way to make life easier.

I used to smoke. When I decided to quit that habit, about twenty or so years ago, it was really hard. In addition to the addiction, which is real, I had the habit of smoking. Now that I am a non-smoker, I don't wonder, after a big meal or when I pick up the telephone, whether I should light a cigarette or not. It doesn't even cross my mind. My life is easier as a non-smoker for many reasons, but one important one is that I don't have those decisions to make all through the day.

Because I was giving up rather than adding a habit, it didn't occur to me right away just how much habits make life easier. We all have daily habits that are such a natural part of our lives that we don't even think about them. Forming a habit takes time. Some studies say two weeks; others suggest thirty days or even longer. Once it's there, though, it comes easily. With this awareness, I've incorporated quite a few new and helpful habits into my life in recent years. I'm proud of every one of them.

So, writing down things that I'm thankful for is a good thing, all on its own. I know it would please my mother, and it adds another bit of discipline into my disorganized life. Beyond that, the gratitude habit has opened my eyes. It would be easy to write a simple, rote list of blessings in my life: my family, a roof over my head, and food to eat are always things I'm grateful for. Repetitive, but true. Since I try to write sincerely about things that please me, I am more observant, and more aware.

When I'm forced out of bed at two in the morning to let a dog outside, and the moon is bright, or the sky is full of stars, I think, "thank you," and the next day, "last night's bright moon," or "that beautiful sky full of stars" will show up in my gratitude-writing. If it rains when we need rain, or the sunshine raises my spirits, I take note. A phone call or a message from a loved one will surely make the list. I've become more appreciative of the small pleasures in my life, as I pay more attention to them. Gratitude is a habit. A simple, eye-opening, life-enhancing, happiness-inducing habit. I highly recommend it!