

**November 24, 2009 Open Mic Recap:
Gratitude Practices for Before and During Thanksgiving
... and Any Other Time**

HIGHLIGHTS: *A dozen folks called in for Tuesday's Open Mic. We spent a lovely hour, reflecting on our respective sources of gratitude in anticipation of Thanksgiving Day and in recognition of the kind of year we've been through. Rather than recapping the content of attendees' gratuities, this edition of OM Recap will lay out the gratitude exercises I introduced, so that you may use them today, tomorrow, and any day that follows.*

GRATITUDE PRACTICES:

1. Gratitude Rapid-Write:

“Write down ten or more things that you feel grateful for, in this moment. Don't censor or judge what comes up; just write it down.”

Following this 60-second free-writing period, you can ask “Any surprises in what you wrote? In what you didn't write?”

This exercise is valuable in itself, and it is a good baseline for additional exercises, including the following ones.

2. Your Martian Chronicle:

“A Martian has been observing you for some days now, as you've been leading your life. He's followed you in his helicopter, without assumptions or preconceptions, and with his senses and his mind wide open. He (or “It”) looks at the list of Gratuities you just compiled, and says, ‘These are fine items, as far as they go. BUT you have missed some very important things that I imagine you feel grateful for. I don't know how you missed them.’ He takes you for a ride in his helicopter, so he can point out the things in your life that didn't appear on your list. It's a new experience for you; watching yourself down there leading your life, and having a Martian narrate the tour. For each aspect of your life that he points out, he says ‘Wake up! You missed this one! It's important! It's amazing!’ ” What items does he point out?

3. Gratitude: A Year-to-Year Comparison

“Think back to where and how you were one year ago today – November, 2008. The world was in the teeth of the economic firestorm from which we are still cleaning up. Reflect on your life and work at that time; vividly recall how it was going. how you were feeling, what you were thinking, what you were anticipating about your future. Now fast forward to one year later, to the present moment.

While it's true that some things in your life may not as good today as they were then, many things are better. Let's focus on the latter: the ‘better’ ones.

With that perspective in mind, write about what you feel especially grateful for these days.”

4. Anticipatory Gratitude Practice (pre-Thanksgiving), expanded from version in Appreciative Moments

Note: we used the following gratitude exercise as a capstone, building on the preceding ones. It expands on the Thanksgiving Week chapter in my book, by guiding you in imagining how you could express the gratitude you feel as you contemplate the people with whom you will be sharing Thanksgiving Day. You can even use it on Thanksgiving Day, before the first guest arrives.

“Picture each person you’ll be spending Thanksgiving Day with.

Imagine greeting them at your door, or being greeted at their door, on Thursday. Picture the greeting, the smiles, the hugs or handshakes, the jackets, etc.

Now, mentally make the rounds of the dinner table. Let your eyes roam, take in how many are there and who is seated where.

For each person, as you see them in your mind’s eye, silently identify what you love or like most about them, their most admirable qualities, or a memory of a happy (or otherwise meaningful) time you’ve spent with them. Experience the positive feelings that go with these positive memories.

As you are in the midst of this scenario that will take place in just a couple of hours or days, I want you to now imagine how you could express the gratitude and/or other feelings you’re experiencing, on Thursday. What could you say, that would express whatever positive feeling? Or what actions, what ways of expressing that gratitude or other feelings could you take? Alternatively, how could you ‘hold yourself’ how could you ‘show up’ that would be as eloquent an expression of gratitude as any words you could speak or any actions you could take?

Repeat these ‘mental rounds’ today and tomorrow, and watch what happens. Share this exercise with someone else, and see what happens.

You may find that it increases (a) your sense of anticipation (which we can call Anticipatory Savoring), and (b) your enjoyment of Thanksgiving Day. And because of the positive energy you’ll be exuding when Thursday rolls around, you’ll be amplifying others’ enjoyment of the day.”

DEPARTMENT OF SHAMELESS SELF-PROMOTION:

It’s not too early, and it’s not too late, to give *Appreciative Moments* as a thoughtful holiday gift. Please contact me at ed@edwardjacobson.com to order signed copies. Thanks! *Ed*