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Be grateful,  
even when  
times get tough.

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November is here again to remind us to be thankful. With the high costs, natural disasters, uncertainty in the world, our own life drama, and the tremendous amount of division in our country, we may get dismayed and find it hard to identify the things we are thankful for. However, it's during times when we are experiencing the greatest amount of hardship that we can find beauty in simplicity and be thankful for the little things that make life bearable and even enjoyable.

I know that may sound corny and just not possible, but IT IS! It has been in the most challenging times in my life that I have seen with great clarity what's important and what I am grateful for- family, friends, time to binge on tv shows :), breathing clean air, feeling the sun on my face, having food to eat, a warm bed...The list is endless. We do have to change our focus from what we DON'T have control over and focus on the things we CAN control and have that can utilize to bring us joy. Joy doesn't just show up, we have to allow it to happen and embrace the moments of joy when we have them.

A couple of years ago I read *"The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World"* by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, where they shared some of their wisdom on this very topic. They shared stories of people experiencing great hardship and found that people that were grateful for what they had and did not focus on what they didn't have, were more resilient and happier. Also, that suffering is part of life, and when we can accept that and navigate through the rough waters of life with hope and joy we arrive at happiness. Having support when suffering also helps, as they shared their unusual friendship helped them carry the stress/pressure of their significant roles.

Let's focus on the simple things that unite us as humans and find the similarities through which we can reconnect and be thankful for in order to support each other in finding collective joy. How do we do this? I know this is something that it's going to take time but for now I'm asking you to take action by: 1) Writing down a simple thing you are thankful for each day of this month. 2) At the end of the month share your list with a friend or colleague and talk about it or post in social media and ask if they have similar things on their list. 3) Take the time to discover the similarities or differences by opening up conversation and bringing connectivity to our disconnected world.

I look forward to reading your lists, so please share them with me.

Thank you for all your support and have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

Marilyn Mejia-Peña, LCSW



# IS GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE A THING OF THE PAST?



I've been asking myself this question for the last few months and have vented with friends about the rage, (yes rage) and sense of hopelessness experienced because of horrible customer service while trying to obtain medical services for my mom. The lack of compassion and caring when dealing with doctors, nurses, case managers, insurance providers, and DME vendors, was unacceptable and extremely frustrating to me. I found myself ending most interactions cursing away at the phone as I hung up. "WTF is going on with these people and the system?" I asked myself, baffled by the incompetence and lack of humanity in the service delivery of those interactions. Is customer service dead? Did anyone teach the managers that it is their job to train their staff properly? Why are people not communicating with each other? Why am I having to do the case manager's job and tell them what their role is? Do they care?... The questions were overwhelming, and I concluded that most of the people I had a negative interaction with did not have proper training, did not have administrative support and the departments were all disconnected and lacked effective systems of communication (most likely on purpose to confuse consumers and not cover services.) Additionally, those service providers were forgetting that the person on the other side of the phone or email was another human being, who was immensely impacted by their competence (or lack thereof) and willingness to help. They stopped caring about their customers.

So, I do think good customer service still exists, but it's on its way to extinction if we don't make efforts to care about whom we are serving and demand responsibility for effective service delivery. In the service provider industry, we are working with people directly and good customer service is not just essential but expected. Therefore, I urge you to ask yourself these questions: Do I care what happens to my clients? Am I just working for a paycheck? Am I invested in their success? How? Do I care about my staff, and do I provide proper training? Are clients satisfied with my services? Reflect on them and make necessary changes if needed to rekindle a sense of purpose in the job you perform and take pride and responsibility for the work output. Taking accountability for our work ethic opens the door to caring about our client's satisfaction as it reflects on us. I thank my retail and waitressing experience for giving me a foundation on good customer service, but sadly I know many people might not know what it looks like. Thus, here's a checklist to help identify some of the responsibilities and remember that clients are human beings trying to navigate life just like us.

## GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE CHECKLIST

### COMMUNICATE

Be able to explain the cause of the problem and the process involved to solve it. Listen attentively and empathically.



### MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION

Be friendly, say thank you, show respect, listen, be responsive, and be sincere



### BE INFORMATIVE

Recognize clients' concerns, answer questions clearly, and demonstrate good product knowledge. Refer to someone else that can help if you can't



### BE POSITIVELY HELPFUL

Cater to your client's needs with a positive attitude (even when the clients are upset)

POSITIVE  
VIBES

### FOLLOW-UP

Visit, call or email to follow-up and provide ways for clients to provide feedback. That shows that you care enough to ease your customers' concerns, even after the first encounter.



[www.ResilienceSocialWork.com](http://www.ResilienceSocialWork.com)

Source: [www.answerfirst.com/what-does-it-mean-to-provide-excellent-customer-service/](http://www.answerfirst.com/what-does-it-mean-to-provide-excellent-customer-service/)



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