

# The Common Denominator

by [Christine Sarno-Doyle](#)

I hold such gratitude for blessings in my life in all of its forms: opportunities, challenges, people. I know how very fortunate I am.



I've held a genuine appreciation for authentic, levelheaded, friends and family who no matter how outrageous my life became stood resolute in a normalcy that I admired even though for whatever reason for so long a time I could not attain for myself. I held genuine appreciation and admiration for my mentors, be they peers, employers, friends or family. Still today I am humbled by the time and energy they invested to nurture and cultivate a potential they saw in me when I couldn't see it myself. All of this support enabled me to pursue, build, and ultimately prosper in a successful and rewarding life.

I hold immense gratitude for the opportunity to achieve my life-long dream of attaining my college degree. At forty-five, I think the taste was sweeter than had I achieved it two decades earlier even though I wish I had. I wonder how much farther I could have gone in my career and professional life had I had that diploma in my hand sooner. The truth is, I learned so much more about life the way it all unfolded. The stops and starts for lack of funds were heart-wrenching. More often than not I felt I would never reach my goal and almost gave up. But, step by step, course by course, eventually on a May afternoon I stood in line with a 1998 graduating class, walked on stage and accepted that diploma in my hand. One of the happiest and proudest moments of my life.

I have so much for which to be grateful. I count my blessings every day.

Today, I can even find gratitude for the hardships and refuse. Oh, how those memories pain me. But, facing them as opposed to ignoring them helps me to process them. Thus, allowing me to incorporate into my life what I might learn from them and let them go. Sadness creeps in and I grieve for what was lost - time, energy, opportunities, if only. If only I had matured sooner. What more? What if? But, I've gained from these too. Most striking about the despair is the realization of how far I've come. I could not have appreciated the latter had I not experienced the former. Growth came through perseverance. It was arduous and claimed every speck of strength I could muster. I see it now, and I am grateful.

There is so much for which I am grateful. Yet until recently, I had left an important element off my gratitude list: *self*. I was so appreciative of the opportunities and to those who offered them to me that I perceived it all as luck. But, this perception left unnoticed my ability to seize what was offered and capitalize on it - to make my own luck. It finally came to me that if I was willing to step up and take responsibility for the ill-fated portions of my life, then I must be willing to step up and take responsibility for its success. I brought to the table my thoughts, my beliefs, my actions, my self-respect, my lack thereof. The common denominator in each equation was me.

It took time but now understand; I was the common denominator through it all and that in order to effect practical change I needed to address that function in all equations. I understand that now.

To see this is captivating and it's life changing.

I have the capacity today to be selective of which brass rings I stretch to grasp - for not all speak to my soul.

I have the capacity today to heed an inner wisdom which leads me in directions I would not ordinarily choose - but which I recognize as growth.

I have the capacity today to recognize an opening door and one that is closing - and the wherewithal to manage each with dignity and respect.

I have the capacity to experience growth at its edgy fast-and-furious pace and at its uncomfortably slow pace - each holds unique challenges. For the most part, I've found growth is achieved at the slower rate with a great deal of introspection which I liken to finding the common denominator of an equation and addressing its function in order to achieve a favorable result.