

“When life gives you mountains, put on your boots and start hiking.”
– Author unknown

A friend sent me this quote because he thought it sounded like me. The quote came with a picture of a woman about to hike up a big mountain. My friend was right. This perfectly depicts how I think. Hiking is my happy place. Hiking clears my head and centers me. So if and when I'm feeling stressed or any other negative emotion, I want to put on my hiking boots and take that first step. Pretty much immediately, I feel better. Along the way, I try to enjoy nature's beauty that surrounds me: green trees against a blue sky, vast waterfalls and their sheer power, serene lakes, wildflowers in full bloom on the trail or a beautiful sunrise on the drive to my destination. Unfortunately, most people don't take the time to enjoy these wonders of nature. Most of us probably feel as if there have been a lot of mountains placed in front of us over the last couple of years. But remember, nothing is insurmountable. Positivity helps any situation, especially negative ones. So as we close out another year and put it behind us, I want focus on two super-positive emotions. As you enter into 2023, if you need help with getting on your path to health, be sure to reach out to me.

Yours in health,
Susan Monaco, Certified Health Coach
Health and Wellness by Design
www.healthnwellnessbydesign.com
susan@healthnwellnessbydesign.com

Hope and Gratitude



I've written newsletters about how practicing gratitude can change your life and the amazing power of hope. Individually, both topics are important, but together, they're a powerhouse. In this uncertain environment in which we live, you need more reminders of why you must focus on the good things in life. Here some of my thoughts about two of them: hope and gratitude.

- The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines hope as: *“to cherish a desire with anticipation: to want something to happen or be true”*. It defines gratitude as *“affording pleasure or contentment”* and *“appreciative of benefits received.”* What is your personal definition of these two important words? That's what really matters.
- Stop getting so caught up in *“life”* that you forget to actually live.
- Practice gratitude every day. This includes something as simple as saying *“thank you”* when someone does something nice for you.
- If you acknowledge all the good you have in your life, it will become the foundation for everything that's truly good and it will always outweigh the bad.
- Make a list of all the things and people for which and for whom you are grateful. Then tell them.
- Gratitude tends to help you make sense of your past, bring peace to your today and will ultimately create a beautiful vision for tomorrow.
- Sometimes you need to go through a bad or negative experience so you learn how to help someone else who will go through it later.
- Never lose hope because even in your darkest hours, it's always dangling out there, no matter how far away it may seem in the present moment.

- In the story of Pandora's Box, when it was opened, a plethora of negative emotions escaped. But at the very bottom of her box, waiting all by itself, was hope. That's telling you to never give up because hope is always there, even when it's hiding.
- There's a direct connection between hope and healing. Many years ago, Norman Cousins, who was given just a few months to live, healed himself with basically just laughter and high doses of intravenous Vitamin C. It's a great story. He ended up living another 26 YEARS, proving all his doctors wrong. He once said, "*The capacity of hope is the most significant fact of life. It provides human beings with a destination and the energy to get started.*" He was living proof of his point.
- Think about what you want and then go after it. Don't let anyone or anything stop you.
- Make sure you let your hopes shape your future, not your hurts. It's not as easy as it sounds, but you can do it!
- Hope is really important because it can make current difficult moments easier to withstand. If you truly believe that tomorrow will be better, it will help you handle the setbacks of today.
- Forget about yesterday, it's over and has already forgotten about you. Don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow never comes and you'll never have the opportunity to meet. Enjoy today because that's all you have. Never forget that today is a gift.
- Gratitude is definitely a choice...just like happiness. Choose both.
- Being thankful is the beginning of feeling grateful and gratitude is ultimately the completion of thankfulness. You can't ever have one without the other.
- I think it's really important to enjoy all the little things in everyday life because one day, you may end up looking back and realizing they were actually pretty big things.
- Gratitude is a small act with a tremendous payoff. The recipient will appreciate knowing he or she made a difference. But the person who expresses the gratitude is the one who gains the most. Remember the saying, "*It's better to give than to receive?*" That holds true for emotional gifts as well. Give gratitude freely and frequently and reap its rewards.

I don't want to sound like some kind of Pollyanna here. Life is tough. I've experienced more loss in a decade than most people suffer in a lifetime. It could have made me jaded. But I'm a fighter, so I won't let anything break me. I might bend, but I definitely don't break. Everything does happen for a reason, though you may never know why. The important thing is that I never gave up hope. You shouldn't either. I believe we're placed here on earth to learn lessons, so be sure to learn from your mistakes and don't repeat them. Ultimately, I'm grateful for the very painful lessons I've learned because they've graced me with the ability (and the knowledge) to help others.

Never forget that when you think all hope is lost, the reality is, it's often all that remains. Always look back in forgiveness and forward in both hope and gratitude. You certainly can't live on hope and gratitude, but you DEFINITELY can't live without them!

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!