

"The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing...not healing, not curing....that is a friend who cares. "

– Henri Nouwen

I always get a bit nostalgic this time of year and I have to remind myself that there are so many things for which I should be grateful. The lack of family cuts deep, but thankfully, I'm reminded of the good friends who are the family I got to choose. They have been my ship as I've had to navigate through difficult waters. As I reminisce about my life....the choices I've made, the paths I've chosen, the relationships I've formed, my thoughts tend to go one of two ways. I can be thankful for what I have or resentful for what I don't. Unfortunately, when we're in a place of despair, it's easy for our minds to go to a negative place. Hopefully, there's some sort of lifeline that brings us back. Friends are the lifeline who have the ability to do just that. During the month of Thanksgiving, it's important to focus on what's good rather than what's bad. This month, I'm writing this as much for me as I am for you. It's easy to lose faith and lose sight of the positive when things don't go our way. But always remember to be grateful for the true friends who are the constants in our lives. To my true friends (and you know who you are), thank you for being there in my moments of despair, my moments of joy and in all the moments, good or bad, when I knew you were just a phone call away.

Yours in health,

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'Tis the Season of Gratitude

As the year winds down and the days grow shorter, it seemed like a good time to remind you of the simple, yet profound act of giving thanks, especially with Thanksgiving right around the corner. Gratitude isn't just a polite *"thank you,"* it's a mindset that can transform how you experience everyday life. When you pause to appreciate what you have: your relationships, your health, your work, and even the smallest joys like a glass of wine, a warm meal or a friendly smile, you begin to see abundance instead of scarcity. Gratitude shifts your focus from what's missing to what's meaningful.

Research shows that practicing gratitude improves mental health, strengthens relationships and increases overall happiness. Back in May 2020, I wrote about this very thing in a newsletter entitled *"Can Practicing Gratitude Change your Life?"* It may be worth another read on my website. It reminds you that practicing gratitude, even in challenging times, can help you recognize that there are some bright spots worth celebrating. Gratitude connects us to not only our purpose, but also to the present moment. Gratitude doesn't have to come from grand events. It's usually found in the quiet, everyday blessings that surround us. Here are some reminders of things for which we can be thankful:

The People Around Us

- Family and friends who love and support us through life's ups and downs.
- Colleagues and mentors who challenge us to grow.
- Strangers who show kindness or small gestures that brighten our days.

Life's Simple Joys

- A sunrise after a long stormy night.
- The comfort of home and the warmth of belonging.
- Laughter shared with others.
- Music, art or stories that connect us to something greater.
- A glass of wine with friends after a challenging hike.

Growth and Learning

- Challenges that teach us strength and patience.
- Failures that lead to wisdom and renewal.
- Opportunities to learn something new each day.

Health and Strength

- The power to take wellness into our own hands.
- The ability to move, breathe and think freely.
- Resources to learn about healing when we need it.
- The resilience of body and spirit that keeps us going during tough times.

The World Around Us

- The beauty of nature, the scent of rain, the sound of water on a hike, the calm of a sunset or sunrise.
- Moments of peace in a busy world.
- The chance to make a difference, no matter how small.

Hope and New Beginnings

- Every new day is a fresh start.
- The courage to dream and grow.
- The faith that things can and hopefully will get better.

Ways to Cultivate Gratitude

- Keep a gratitude journal: Write down at least three things you're thankful for each day.
- Express appreciation: Tell someone how much he or she means to you.
- Practice mindfulness: Pause to notice something beautiful in each and every day.
- Give back: Acts of kindness are gratitude in motion.

In closing, as I reflect on this season of gratitude, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to YOU. Your kindness, support, and presence give me inspiration to keep writing, even when sometimes the words don't easily come. Here's to carrying thankfulness, not just through this season, but into every day ahead. Let's keep celebrating the good things, whether they be big or small, together. Happy Thanksgiving.

Have a wonderful month.