

Experiences, Insights, Stories, Reports, & Wisdom

From Past Gratitude Groove Participants

From Christina: Gratitude for her Husband of 30 Years, Who Still Forgets Her Favorite Salsa!

After living with my husband for over 30 years, it is often easy to take one's spouse for granted. I have found over the past 40 days of The Gratitude Groove that I have been more aware of what I HAVE as opposed to what I DON'T HAVE in my marriage.

I'm not saying I've completely changed into an adoring, doting wife, but I do feel that I have more of an understanding of all the good things about my marriage. We don't have any major issues – just the day-to-day minor irritations that crop up – so the examples I have may not seem very earthshaking or amazing to others, but they are important to me. One incident that comes to mind is an evening a few weeks ago when my husband stopped on his way home from work to pick up our dinner at El Pollo Loco. When he came home, I began unpacking all of the food and found that he had forgotten to get the condiments, various salsas, etc. I immediately felt irritated by this (I know, I know – it was terribly petty; I'm very embarrassed to be revealing this, but try to remember that I was really, really hungry at the time!!). But then I stopped myself...First of all, I thought about how lucky I was that this poor man had just driven all the way home from Santa Monica, and offered to pick up dinner on his way home because I didn't feel like cooking. And I loved him for it. Then I remembered that I had a jar of salsa in the fridge, and I just happened to also have some cilantro left over from another meal a couple of days before. And voila! The meal and my marriage were saved! Later my husband mentioned that he'd noticed how well I'd handled the situation. He said, "The old Christina wouldn't

have let that go so easily." And he was right. Before the Gratitude Groove, I would have been upset that he forgot "my favorite salsa, " and it would have ruined the meal, perhaps even the entire evening over something so small and unimportant. The fact that he noticed and commented on the change was extremely significant – and also, it simply made me feel good that he noticed!

When women friends speak of the positive in their lives for 40 consecutive days, their friendships grow to a richer, deeper level of connection.

Says Jocelyn, "It has been great to have an excuse to take our conversations past the usual catch-up and get to more deep emotional and philosophical questions on a regular basis. I think it's important to remember that such talks are not a luxury, but a staple of quality living. Checking in with my gratitude girlfriend partner has definitely had a positive effect on my daily life. Just getting out of my own head and naming something that I'm grateful for feels good. My thought process is usually something like, "Okay I have to check in about gratitude, but I don't know if I really have time right now. Or maybe this won't be a good time for Jen. Isn't it right when she's picking up the kids? Maybe I should wait. Oh well, I'll just give it a try." And then afterwards I am so glad that I took a few minutes to express gratitude about something, even something small, like drive-thru Starbucks on a cold day!"

Says Robin, "My friendship with my gratitude girlfriend partner is deeper, and we have grown and matured from the experience. Our tendency to complain is diminished, and we are more resilient; the sad patches are shorter, and there's a trust that things will work out that wasn't present when we began our 40 Days of gratitude. The daily gratitude connection became my lifeline; it reminded me of when I used to drink a glass of wine every day around 6pm, that ahh-hh feeling

that washed over me. Instead of the glass of wine, I came to crave the gratitude connection; it was an important bookmark to my days and reminded me to continue to practice gratitude with my son too."

Report #2 from Terry and Jessica, while still on their rock-and-roll band's European tour...

One of the things I thought was very resonant was one of Jessica's gratitude moments. She was in a hotel room, chatting away with her boyfriend and laughing. We were in Scotland, and the view, although not stunning outside our hotel, can be amazing if the sun or the fog hits in the right way (which it was in this instance). She had to call her ex-husband about a business matter, and while she was talking to him, very amicably, she looked out the window at the shimmering sunlight and realized that she was eternally grateful that she wasn't married to him anymore.

It's kind of phenomenal how easy it is, really, to make any negative into a positive. I'm actually finding the gratitude exercise extremely fertile ground for things to appreciate! There are so many things to be grateful for in each moment, that sometimes it all seems too easy. Not to be Pollyanna-ish, but it's a fact. I am aware, however, that during life's terrible trials it may not be so easy. And I'm also aware that we are in the honeymoon period of the Gratitude Groove. I think the trick is to persevere, even when you think you've got the whole thing down pat. There's always deeper to go in gratitude.

It's curious how "the ego" keeps coming up in our positivity pow-wows. I would say that both Jessica and I have very similar ego issues. We are painfully concerned about what others think – like many women are. We want to please people; we want everyone to be happy. We both feel we have something to prove at times. I'm not sure why the gratitude exercises bring these issues to light, but I have to say, that's one more thing to be grateful for! Perhaps the

strength that you gather by counting your blessings helps to give you the courage to look your weaknesses in the eye without fear. Or maybe since everything seems so much lighter, your own faults don't seem so bad either, and they just become something else to transform. You can change most moments from being dire to being fabulous by changing your perspective, and you can change yourself from someone who cowers in self-obsession to someone who ventures out onto a brand new road.

Tonight, we were both grateful that the show went very well. It was a great atmosphere, and there was good will all around. Both of us, as well, realize that our annoyance with the guys in our band has a bit to do with PMS, and we decided we were grateful for that because it meant we weren't simply whining, intolerant bitches.

"Girlfriends, Why Do We Speak of Gratitude??"

Gabi: "My mom asked me, 'But why...why do you need to talk about what you're grateful for?' I thought it, first, a silly, then a good question, and I realized the answer is we need to talk about what we're grateful for because it's like meditation or focused breathing or yoga...we do it so that it becomes a "practice", something daily that can anchor us and expand our awareness."

On Gratitude for Challenges At Work:

Britt: "A woman I work with has been very hostile, demeaning, and has made a constant effort to exclude me from many necessary job-related situations. When we started the Gratitude Groove, I made a conscientious effort to attempt to turn this around by changing the way I reacted to her, tried to avoid her, etc, and basically showering her with niceness, engaging her by making her feel important and needed. My attitude and efforts completely changed our working

relationship. She now seeks me out, keeps me in the loop of communication and is pleasant to me. My choosing to be in a different space changed her as well.”

On Gratitude for Awareness of “Bonding Over Bashing”

Raquel: “I can see how easy it is to get in the thick of negativity and irritation without consciously being aware of the fact that you’re heading there. It’s an easy crutch to be petty. In my female friendships, there is “bonding over bashing” and I am not sure how it all even happens so quickly. One minute, we’re talking about something mild enough and then, negativity strikes, and the black cloud is suddenly there. I am grateful that I can recognize my part in that behavior and change it.”

On Gratitude for Looking Lousy & Feeling Good!

Timi: You want me to be honest?? I have to say, I’m thinking I look hairy and blotchy and bloated. But here’s what’s different for me...oddly enough, I feel pretty darn good on the inside, which is unusual for me. Pre-gratitude, feeling hideous on the outside meant the inside automatically matched. That’s not the truth anymore.”

On Gratitude for Recognizing You’re Getting Mad About Nothing:

Britt: “Day 7’s Gratitude message really resonated for me. My “mad about nothing” generally happens on my way home from work where I tend to make up shit to be mad about when I get home by creating things in my mind such as, ‘bet there’s dirty dishes in the sink, bet he didn’t do this or that, etc.’ My husband works out of the home so I have expectations of things he should be doing while I’m at work, and because I’m in a completely pissy mood and have had a bad day, I walk thru the doors at night ready for battle, and it’s very damaging. I’ve thought a lot about this behavior, and we’ve talked about it. I’m grateful for this wakeup call and even though I still get mad about nothing, I’m now a lot more

aware of it and can even laugh at it and also be honest. So now, I'm trying to walk thru the door on those nights when I'm grumpy and tell the truth, i.e., just saying, "I'm in a bad mood, and I ask for a hug instead of beating him up."

#3 Report from Terry and Jessica, now in the middle of their European Rock and Roll tour, and at the halfway point, Day 20, of their Gratitude Groove.

We have just finished 15 shows in a row! Not very many bands do it like that, and I find it a bit of a grind, but Jessica and I agree that we are so grateful we don't have to do regular jobs. She says that you kind of HAVE to appreciate what you've got because, well, it's what you've got! That seems facile, but I know exactly what she means. Otherwise you are forever living somewhere other than in your own life. And when you do start to love what you've got, you start to love your own life and you wouldn't trade with anyone. I can honestly say that I would not swap my life for anyone else's. Do you think many people feel that way? I honestly don't know, but I'm sure I used to spend a lot of time being envious of others. Being happy in your own life opens up a huge field of opportunity to feel happy for the success of others. I've found that to be one of the biggest joys in my recent development doing the Gratitude Groove; I feel genuinely happy when someone else succeeds, even if it's something I have not managed to achieve. It gives an enormous sense of well-being.

We have been to Hamburg, Cologne, Amsterdam, Brussels and London since the last gratitude report. In Amsterdam, Jessica's friend Jacy from LA joined our entourage, and she will be with us for the duration. She has sat in on our pow-wows, which may not be the intended situation, but it's kind of an interesting development, because gratitude practice does rub off on people! We've had a few witnesses now – kind of inevitable in this touring scenario where privacy is nonexistent.

A few days ago, Jessica had a very upsetting exchange (one of hundreds over the years) with her sister. She felt like she just couldn't take any more abuse. Her sister never feels that Jessica gives her enough (time, attention, babysitting, etc) and lets her know about it in quite hurtful ways. Jessica wrote her a long email, finally telling her how much it hurt and gave her sister a bit of a gratitude lecture. She told her they should be appreciating each other not antagonizing, and that if her sister realized how much she had to be grateful for, then more of what she wanted would come her way – as Jessica has been discovering firsthand. It's hard to explain the whole situation, but it has literally been years of pain and bad feelings between them. Anyway, Jessica waited very nervously for her sister's reply, expecting more abuse or total silence, but her sister apologized and said that she thought they were going to have a great Christmas together. Now THAT really was a miracle.

In Amsterdam I had a bit of a blip in the morning. I got lost, couldn't find the hotel and was feeling incredibly panicky – like I was about to lose it! It's understandable, since we've all had no sleep and go, go, go, for weeks on end. Someone said, 'You're not having a good day, are you Terry?' Jessica said, 'She IS having a good day!' And it was great because it pulled me back into our rapport, and I recovered almost immediately. I'd really lost my perspective, but I got it back so quickly. Great! I feel like nothing can rattle me for long or that seriously. Ideally, we should be able to handle anything life doles out (within bounds of reason, I'm not talking about torture or insane circumstances) to us. It's all life. It's all there, so we need to deal with it. I am learning to trust my ability to cope with things, and I am delighted that it seems to work! My motives seem to have been purified as well, if that makes any sense. Jealously, pettiness, insecurity all seem to be dissolving lately, and that is something I have wanted to happen for years. I try to dispel these pesky emotions always, but it's not that easy sometimes. It's such a bonus that this phenomenon seems to be one of the gifts of gratitude: I don't need to protect myself because I'm already protected.

Says Gratitude Girlfriend, Jean, "I would recommend this 40-Day positive talk program because most people think gratitude is a beautiful idea...but you really need to do it to see results. On a happiness scale of 1-10, I rated myself a 7 at the start of this program. I knew intellectually that some of my joy was dependent upon what was going on externally for me. At the end of the program, I rated myself a 10 because I see how I can be in gratitude/joy the moment I choose it...and I choose it all the time now."