

Pass It On®...

Let Gratitude Move You to Action

Our modern culture tends to focus on past regrets and future uncertainty. It is the present where we need to focus, on who we are and what we can be. Something we could learn from the Ojibwe tribe in the mid-Northern states and Ontario, Canada. For the Ojibwe, names are less about what people call you and more for who you are. The name is a spiritual guide to lead through troubled times. The baby is brought before the name giver and a name is bestowed, usually based on a dream after a long fast. The ritual creates a time to be grateful for ancestors and a future of promise. A teenage boy who had grown close to an Ojibwe tribe was given a name in gratitude for his kindness to them: "Blue Between The Clouds." When he asked what it meant he was told that even as the storm clouds gathered there was always a little bit of blue sky visible. "That is you, gratitude."

What a difference it would make if each of us carried a name reminding us that we are Gratitude. Some cultures just better understand what a force gratitude can be---when it is given and when it is received.

In the midst of troubled times, we can still find gratitude. We can still express it in some way no matter our name. In June of 2020, a few months into the pandemic when the hospitalizations in New York City were overwhelming healthcare workers, a group of nurses flew in from the West Coast to lend a hand. One of the young nurses was assigned a mother of six children. She was on a ventilator, quarantined from her husband, and terrified. Carly, the young nurse decided to cheer her up by bringing a group of nurses together to sing "My Girl." With a tube in her throat and needles in her arm, all the young mother could do was cry...and raise a few fingers to say thank you. There were tears all around, nurses who were grateful they could help and comfort, and a mother who was grateful they were there. At that moment, a little blue sky was visible between the clouds. With a simple hand gesture, the mother expressed her gratitude. "That little thank you changed me forever," Carly says. "I went because I wanted to make a difference I came home grateful for what I learned."

Gratitude moves us to be kinder. A widow who lost her husband in the midst of the pandemic felt alone. Her neighbors, grateful for over 50 years of friendship expressed their gratitude by delivering a box of fresh produce to her house every Monday during lockdown. It's our gratitude for what we have and who has loved us that becomes the force to create the chain of good acts that bind us all together.

In the early morning quiet, when so many of us are awakened by the uncertainty of the coming day, we can find peace by mentally listing the things we are grateful for. The angst dissipates and we reach a new place in our life that we accept and appreciate. What's next is to share. Send a random thank you note, make a call. Look around. There is always someone to thank. By doing so, we become something new; we are that blue between the clouds that makes all the difference in someone's life.

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