

Submission for weekly column “Space for Reflection” in The Current

What Gets You Going?

Do you sometimes find it hard to get going and do the things you’re supposed to do? Maybe you just don’t feel like reading that homework assignment. Or cleaning the kitchen. Or maybe you know that paper you have to write is going to be difficult, so you can’t bring yourself to even get started.

If you’re like me, it’s right about this point in the school year that the accumulation of busy days, term paper assignments, and seasonal cold symptoms can start to wear me down. But when I’m feeling overwhelmed by too much to do, by some difficult task facing me, or when I’m just not feeling energized, there’s something I’ve found that gets me going again. I take a moment to think about all that I have to be grateful for. This helps me break through the “pity party” I’m holding for myself! And as I recognize all the people and things in my life that bring me love and joy, and as I begin to feel more grateful, I also feel renewed energy to get going on those projects before me.

It’s like being grateful is a fuel source. I guess because when I feel grateful, I want to show my gratitude. I can show gratitude for my family by cleaning the kitchen. I can show gratitude for the gift of living near the ocean by bringing my textbook to the beach and actually doing that reading assignment. I can thank my creator for the blessing of intelligence by expressing that intelligence in a good term paper.

I realize that Thanksgiving for most of us is primarily about food, family, and football. But I want to put a plug in for the “giving thanks” part of the holiday. Not because we “should” be grateful out of some sense of duty, but because there’s value in remembering all that we really do have to be thankful for. After all, how many other people long to attend college or graduate school but do not have the opportunity or ability to do so? Let alone how many are living in conditions of such poverty or warfare or desperation, that just having a safe place to sleep and food to eat would be a dream come true.

No matter how much homework we have or how tired we are from writing papers, anyone reading this column is vastly more fortunate than countless others. Gratitude puts things in perspective. And by putting things in perspective, gratitude can actually work in our lives in a powerful way. Happy Thanksgiving.

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