

Excerpt from the NYT (full story at [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/22/science/a-serving-of-gratitude-brings-healthy-dividends.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/22/science/a-serving-of-gratitude-brings-healthy-dividends.html?_r=0))

## **A Serving of Gratitude May Save the Day**

**By JOHN TIERNEY**

Cultivating an “attitude of gratitude” has been linked to better health, sounder sleep, less anxiety and depression, higher long-term satisfaction with life and kinder behavior toward others, including romantic partners.

But what if you’re not the grateful sort? Start with “gratitude lite.” That’s the term used by Robert A. Emmons, of the University of California, Davis, for the technique used in his pioneering experiments he conducted. They instructed people to keep a journal listing five things for which they felt grateful, like a friend’s generosity, something they’d learned, a sunset they’d enjoyed.

The gratitude journal was brief — just one sentence for each of the five things — and done only once a week, but after two months there were significant effects. Compared with a control group, the people keeping the gratitude journal were more optimistic and felt happier. They reported fewer physical problems.

Once you’ve learned to count your blessings, Dr. Emmons says, you can think bigger. “As a culture, we have lost a deep sense of gratefulness about the freedoms we enjoy, a lack of gratitude toward those who lost their lives in the fight for freedom, a lack of gratitude for all the material advantages we have,” he says. “The focus of Thanksgiving should be a reflection of how our lives have been made so much more comfortable by the sacrifices of those who have come before us.”

## **ONE MORNING**

**Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer**

One morning  
we will wake up  
and forget to build  
that wall we've been building,  
the one between us  
the one we've been building  
for years, perhaps  
out of some sense  
of right and boundary,  
perhaps out of habit.

One morning  
we will wake up  
and let our empty hands  
hang empty at our sides.  
Perhaps they will rise,  
as empty things  
sometimes do  
when blown  
by the wind.  
Perhaps they simply  
will not remember  
how to grasp, how to rage.

We will wake up  
that morning  
and we will have  
misplaced all our theories  
about why and how  
and who did what  
to whom, we will have mislaid  
all our timelines  
of when and plans of what

and we will not scramble  
to write the plans and theories anew.

On that morning,  
not much else  
will have changed.  
Whatever is blooming  
will still be in bloom.  
Whatever is wilting  
will wilt. There will be fields  
to plow and trains  
to load and children  
to feed and work to do.

And in every moment,  
in every action, we will  
feel the urge to say thank you,  
we will follow the urge to bow.



## *The monkey's gift*

Once upon a time a traveller was walking in the bush when, out of sheer malice, a monkey sitting on a high tree branch threw a coconut at him.

The man rubbed his bruised head, and then stopped to pick up the coconut. First he drank the milk. Then he ate the tender flesh of the coconut. And then he sat down in a shady spot and patiently carved a bowl out of the coconut shell.

And finally he looked up to the treetop and thanked the monkey, and went on his way.

**Retelling of a traditional African tale**

## GRATEFULNESS

*Dale Biron*

Each day the engine of my gratefulness  
must be coaxed and primed into action.  
Of course like any old clunker,  
it would just as soon stay put.  
For even after the labored start beats the inertia,  
and the plume of white smoke struggles upward,  
the same hills always appear,  
soaring daily – tall and ominous as before.  
There is the long slow hill of “aging”  
so gradual and smooth at first.

And then that steep grade called “*the news.*”  
Yes, and always some mountain of a war  
looming out there, never too far in the distance.  
Even an old idea or a feeling long abandoned  
might conspire to halt this fragile progress –  
valves sputtering, tires flattening, clutch slipping.  
But the old “*potato, potato, potato*” sound  
of the engine, and all its mysterious fuel,  
for which I am truly grateful  
somehow keeps stumbling along.

**I'M THANKFUL**— Elena Stabile (*written at age 9*)

I'm thankful for my board game,  
I lost the dice and pieces.  
I'm thankful for my toes and feet,  
Too bad they don't fit in my cleats.  
I'm thankful for my ruler,  
It broke in half the other day.  
I'm thankful for my puppy.  
My brother let him out to play.  
I'm thankful for my kitty cat,  
It's way too fat and round.  
I'm thankful for my parakeet,  
It's always way too loud.  
I'm thankful.

**LOAVES AND FISHES**

David Whyte

This is not the age of information.  
This is not  
the age of information.  
Forget the news,  
and the radio,  
and the blurred screen.  
This is the time of loaves  
and fishes.  
People are hungry,  
and one good word is bread  
for a thousand.

**For All That Is Our Life by Bruce Findlow**

For all that is our life we sing out thanks and praise

For all life is a gift which we are called to use

To build the common good

And make our own days glad

For needs which others serve, for services we give,

For work and its rewards, for hours of rest and love;

We come with praise and thanks

For all that is our life.

For sorrow we must bear, for failures, pain, and loss,

For each new thing we learn, for fearful hours that pass:

We come with praise and thanks

For all that is our life

For all that is our life we sing out thanks and praise

For all life is a gift which we are called to use

To build the common good

And make our own days glad