



## Life Actually

By Kari Kampakis

### A silver linings mindset

Every morning when we wake up, we have a choice. We can choose to be grateful for what's right in our life or grumpy for what's wrong.

Nobody is born grateful. We learn gratitude by practicing it. This is good news because it means gratitude is within everyone's reach. In any and all circumstances it works. Even if we're skeptical or pessimistic by nature, there's hope. Even if we've been beaten down by life, there's hope.

Learning to be grateful is a matter of noticing what's already there. It's getting over ourselves and what we think life owes us. It's comparing ourselves to those who have less — not more — and would kill to be in our shoes. It's training our mind to see the good in every situation. By applying a new filter, we develop a silver linings mindset that can turn any negative into a positive.

Sound impractical? Let's put the idea to use by thinking of everyday irritations that dampen our mood. Let's take what would normally get under our skin and let it roll off our shoulders using gratitude. Whatever is bothering us, whatever we're taking for granted, someone else is praying to have our problem. Keeping this reality in mind can change our outlook completely.

Consider for a moment the following:

The noise and chaos that awakes us each morning because our kids are wild bucks — an infertile couple prays to wake up to that music.

The leak in our roof that comes back with every hard rain — a family prays for a home of their own, leaky roof and all.

The check-out line at the grocery that tortures us because we're impatient — someone prays for money to buy food and a reason to wait in line.

The date night with our spouse we're tempted to call off because we're tired — someone prays for a spouse who loves them and wants to spend time together.

The toddler who drives us mad because

they never quit running — a mother prays her child will walk one day and enjoy life like other kids.

The job we dread going to day in and day out — someone prays to find a job today because the stress of employment is far better than the stress of unemployment.

The child who constantly calls for us and asks for help — someone is praying their child in college will call them because it's been five days since they've heard their beloved voice.

The car ride home from the beach that should take five hours but instead takes seven — a father prays for the means to take his family on vacation, even if it means sitting in traffic.

The bad hair day that makes us want to stay home — a woman who's lost her hair to chemo prays her hair will grow back, even if it's wild.

Life is stressful. Life is hard. Life annoys the heck out of us sometimes. But when we focus on silver linings, little blessings inside every situation, we realize how blessed we are. Abundantly, richly blessed. Every day we have a choice: the choice to dwell on what's wrong or give thanks for what's right. By making thanks our habit, our instinctive response to both joy and frustration, a silver linings mindset kicks in. Once we have that, life appears better at every turn.

Whatever we're taking for granted, someone else is praying for. The only shortcut to happiness is being happy where we are. Gratitude is free and available to all. Once we catch on to the wonder of that, we can give a heartfelt thanks that something so easy can make such a difference.

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