



**GLUTEN
INTOLERANCE
GROUP**
of East Central Wisconsin

GLUTEN-FREE GRATITUDE

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Educate / Motivate / Advocate

The Guest House

Jalal Al-Din Rumi

"This being human is a guest house. Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all! Even if they're a crowd of sorrows, who violently sweep your house empty of its furniture, still, treat each guest honorably, He may be clearing you out for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice, meet them at the door laughing, and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has been sent as a guide from beyond."

Translation by Coleman Barks

Life is full of twists and turns. We never know what's going to come at us.

Rumi's "The Guest House" poem reminds us to welcome all of our life experiences, even those we consider less desirable.

The emotions we encounter in this life offer us the ability to enter a new state of being - to learn something new about ourselves. Perhaps, they may be preparing us for greater things to come.

No one decides one day to play host to a gluten-related disorder. I know I didn't. This "unexpected visitor" appeared - liked the new digs and decided to hang around. In my heart of hearts, the path that I have traveled is not one I would have chosen. I am eternally thankful for what nutritionist and author, Melissa Diane Smith calls "the gift of gluten-free". All those years ago when I was lying on the living room floor in the fetal position, I could not have imagined what was in store for me [besides death].

I had to give up gluten, but what I have received in return is beyond measure.

It took a while to realize it, but I was given an opportunity to use my skills and talents to help others. I discovered talents I didn't know I had! The biggest gem unearthed in me was a passion and a purpose - something that was lacking in my life previously.

I consider myself an ordinary, average guy. If this transformation can happen to me, it can happen for you.

Peace and blessings,

Alan Klapperich - Branch Manager

A special thank you to Pastor Kimberly Stowell [my spiritual leader] for "planting the seed". This article was inspired by a recent sermon.

Gratitude Library

A series of videos from Robert Emmons PH.D.



Gluten-Free Gratitude Cont.

and small, to help us achieve the goodness in our lives.”

I think it's safe to say that every gluten-free person has ridden an emotional roller coaster. People suffer for years [[6 – 10 years on average](#)]; endure numerous doctor's office visits and usually walk away with more questions than answers. Frustrating to say the least. The result of finally getting answers to the on-going health issues brings an immediate sigh of relief, almost a giddiness. “WHEW, I finally know what's wrong with me!”

All too quickly that euphoria dissipates when reality comes calling - “What am I going eat and how am I going to handle this?” Convenience – gone. Care-free dining – adios. The joy of family gatherings - replaced with dread and worry. Things that took little or no thought - now rivals the logistics of a Mars Rover launch.



For many of us, this transition can be a difficult time.

At first glance, the gluten-free lifestyle means giving up a lot things. However, as we start picking up the pieces of our life and clearing away the debris, we discover that goodness is still there. It has not abandoned us, it is merely manifesting itself in different ways - ways that we’re not used to seeing - it’s in disguise. Somedays, we may need to dig damn hard and deep to find the goodness.

Gratitude allows us to focus on what we have instead of what has been taken away.

TIP: It helps to view what we are receiving as gifts. This helps protect us from taking them for granted.

Let’s explore of a few of these gluten-free gifts. Probably the most obvious and precious gift is the opportunity to improve our health. The gift of love from someone who cares for us when we

Importance of Face-To-Face Support Groups

According to a Columbia University study published in 2015, celiac patients reported better quality of life when they participated in face-to-face support groups compared to online support groups.

Also, longer duration of face-to-face support generated a greater quality of life.

Humans require direct, face-to-face interaction with one another in order to be happy and healthy.

Online groups can be a great source of support, however, it's not without drawbacks or limitations.

It's hard to replace friendly smiles, nodding head(s) of agreement, the sympathetic touch of a hand, or a spirit lifting hug.

Source:

<http://bit.ly/23gBFDX>

Gluten-Free Gratitude Cont.

don't feel well. The gift of compassion from our best friend or loved one who is learning right along side us - cheering us on - being our [gluten-free champion](#). The gift of kindness from a stranger in the gluten-free aisle at the grocery store as they help us avoid a nuclear meltdown because we don't know which product to get. The gift of friendship as we meet others in the gluten-free community; we realize we are not isolated, nor alone. The gift of comfort when we find a product that is labeled and certified gluten-free. These examples simply scratch the surface.

For over a decade, Dr. Emmons and his associates have scientifically documented the [social, physical, and psychological benefits of gratitude](#).

- Gratitude [increases happiness](#).
- Gratitude reduces anxiety and depression.
- Gratitude blocks negative emotions.
- Gratitude improves health: strengthens immune system, reduces blood pressure, lessens symptoms of illness, decreases awareness of aches and pains.
- Gratitude [improves sleep](#). Better sleep is important factor in improving overall health.
- Gratitude [promotes forgiveness](#).
- Gratitude fosters a ["pay it forward"](#) attitude.
- Gratitude [strengthens relationships](#).

Gratitude sounds great, but how can we best harvest these transformative powers?

Cultivating an attitude of gratitude takes a bit of work and practice. At first you may feel uncomfortable or awkward doing it. You may be wobbly and unsteady, just like taking your first steps or your first attempt at riding a bike. You might even find it emotionally painful - you know - kind of like those muscles you didn't know you had until after raking the lawn. Like any skill or activity, the more we do it, the better we get. It is best to start slow and work your way up.

What am I grateful for?

Let's get started right now!

Write down three things in the space below. Big - small - important - silly - it doesn't matter - just write.

GO!

Gluten-Free Gratitude Cont.

Dr. Emmons suggests these [exercises to get started](#). Please be sure to click the links for a more detailed description of these exercises and the reasons why they work:

- Count your Blessings:** Regularly make mental notes of your blessings - no need to write them down. Do it first thing in the morning or before going to sleep. Ask yourself, "What am I grateful for today?"

- Three Good Things:** For a minimum of one week, write down three things that went well each day. Small or large events - it doesn't matter. A tangible, written paper trail is important. In detail, explain why things went well. Capture how you felt at the time and how you felt when remembering the event. Share your thoughts about what caused the event. If you happen to focus negative feelings - shift focus toward the good events and those positive feelings.

- Gratitude Letter:** Write a letter to someone who did something for which you are grateful but you've not fully shared your gratitude. It's best if this person is still alive - someone you can meet face-to-face. When you meet, read them the letter. Take note of their reaction as well as your reaction. Together, discuss your feelings about the letter.

- Savoring Walk:** For a minimum of one week, go for a 20 minute walk. Take a different route each day. During this time, notice as many positive things as you can - sights, sounds, smells, and touches. As you notice something, pause a moment and understand why it's pleasurable to you.

- Keep a Gratitude Journal:** This is similar to Three Good Things above, but more in depth. Evidence shows journaling one to three times per week elevates happiness better than daily writing. For a minimum of two weeks - at least once a week for 15 minutes, describe up to five things for which you feel grateful.

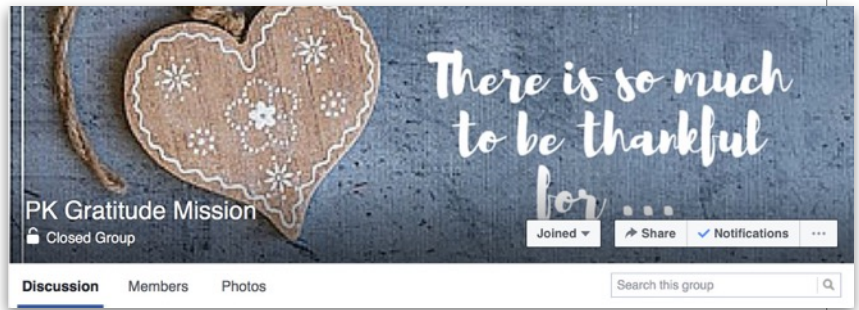


Ahh, I see you need more space to continue your list. Excellent! Carry on

Gluten-Free Gratitude Cont.

Some people find they do better when surrounded by others - like having a workout partner(s). Participating with another person or a group of people inspires and motivates them to continue.

We know the power behind the act of expressing our own gratitude - participating with a group of people expressing their gratitude has to multiply that power - right?



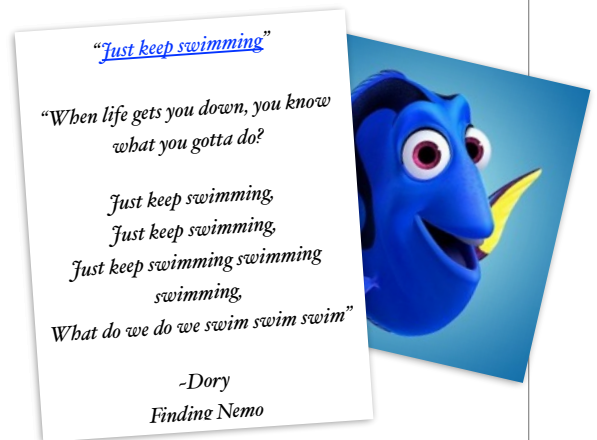
If you are on Facebook and interested in participating in such a group, I invite you to check out [PK Gratitude Mission](#). This is a closed group, created by Pastor Kimberly Stowell - my pastor and spiritual leader of [St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, Rogersville, Wisconsin](#) (home of the gluten-free communion). Only members of the group can participate and see the posts to the group, so you'll need to request to join or be invited.

When asked about the purpose of the group, Pastor Kimberly says: *"The Gratitude Mission is about helping and up-lifting others."*

If large groups frighten you, fear not. Currently this group is small; consisting of less than 80 people. Everyone is kind, courteous, and respectful. I am a member; I find witnessing other people's gratitude moving and inspirational.

-oOo-

Thank you for your time. I will leave you with one final message of inspiration...



This is a publication of GIG of ECW, and we are a local branch of the Gluten Intolerance Group of North America. The opinions expressed here represent that of our Branch and may not reflect the opinions of our national organization.