

Seven Reasons to be Thankful

by Mitch Anthony



At this time of the year, it's important to take an inventory of what you are thankful for. While it's fine to be thankful for a job, money in the bank, or a nice house to live in, the following seven intangibles can truly make a difference in your life, and the lives of your clients.

1. Happiness. The true key to happiness is appreciating what we have and not wanting what we don't need. According to the [World Happiness Report 2015](#), what makes us happiest are social relationships—family, friends, community—not the accumulation of "things." I don't know about you, but I don't find those findings surprising in the least bit!

Wanting more and rewarding ourselves for a job well done are normal, and help us move forward. Where many of us go wrong, however, is in believing that having these things will automatically make us happy. In fact, these things often have the potential to make us unhappy. For example, a bigger house means more work, more maintenance, and more things that can go wrong—at a bigger price tag.

It's important to realize that happiness is a state of mind and not a state of material ownership. Happiness doesn't have to be difficult, so don't complicate it. If you appreciate what you have, you are already experiencing happiness.

2. Fulfillment. Fulfillment is doing the things you love to do and engaging in work that energizes you. Fulfillment may not come from your career because the career you are in may not be the soulful expression of who you are. When you are expressing who you are with your work, you have shaken hands with fulfillment. And once you meet fulfillment, it is next to impossible to go back to work that engages the hands but not the heart.

It's also easier said than done, but it is possible to feel fulfilled, even if it's not at work. If you are feeling stuck because you cannot afford to move on at this point, think of another way to fulfill yourself—a creative outlet or philanthropic pursuit. These pursuits may end up leading to a new career, or at least fulfillment you haven't been able to achieve through your day job.

3. Balance. When our lives are in balance, we enjoy life. How many people do you know who have worked hard for so long that they no longer know how to relax when they get the opportunity? How many people do you know who are so busy supporting their families that they never get to spend time with them? What do they achieve by neglecting the very people that motivate them to earn a good living? Is it any surprise that a [recent study](#) found that the majority of organizations felt their employees enjoyed balance, while less than half the employees felt that way? There is a fine balance to be achieved in attending to the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual sides of our beings. There is also a fine balance to be achieved in attending to the working, familial, and playful sides of our beings. Without balance in our lives, something—or someone—will suffer.

4. Satisfaction. If you are living a thoughtful, introspective, examined life, you will feel a sense of satisfaction. In my experience of talking to people who feel a sense of dissatisfaction in their lives, I see a recurring pattern of lukewarm relationships and a lack of conviction about the impact and meaning of their daily work (see "Fulfillment" above). It is important to look for opportunities to satisfy your need for inner satisfaction at the place you are today before you start believing that greener grass exists elsewhere. Years ago, I had a conversation with a woman who told me she needed to get back to helping the homeless so she could feel satisfied that she was contributing to society in a meaningful way. She felt her life was too self-absorbed. I asked her what she did in her job that helped others. She thought about it and said that she gave seminars helping women discover financial independence. After she said that, she had an epiphany and realized she was ignoring

a great source of inner satisfaction right under her nose. Like happiness, satisfaction can be achieved by appreciating what you already have. Satisfaction revolves around the quality of our efforts and our relationships.

5. Choices. Whether our goals are anchored in work, family, leisure, or all three, we feel a sense of security only when we know we will have the freedom to continue pursuing those goals. We may feel insecure about our jobs. We may fear we will not have enough money to pursue the lifestyle we want. Possessing adequate finances can unquestionably provide a great degree of security because it can provide a material guarantee of sorts that we will be able to do what we want with our lives. Life will always present us with opportunities to feel insecure because very little in this world is guaranteed. We may have the money to do what we want, but poor health can rob us of mobility and activity. We can make all sorts of plans for our future, but there is no guarantee that those plans will pan out. We can build on our sense of security by making the choice to stay close to those who love us, take care of our bodies, and put away all we can toward our financial emancipation.

6. Significance. Viktor Frankl, renowned neurologist and psychiatrist as well as a Holocaust survivor, stated that a person's chief motivation is the need for significance. We are motivated by a need to make a difference somehow in others' lives—to feel we are making a contribution that is significant. Many of us erroneously believe that we can gain a sense of significance by the acquisition of power and control over others. Nothing could be further from the truth. This inward sense of significance is satisfied by the best possible use of our most valuable resource: *time*. We all have only so many days on this earth, and those days are fleeting. Parents get a magnified perspective on the fleeting nature of time as they watch their children grow, leave home, and start independent lives. Money has the power to feed this significance only when it is shared—emancipating us to share our time and skills. By working in jobs or doing things where we see little benefit, we lack a sense of significance. Instead, we feel we are wasting our time. Workaholics who miss all of their children's meaningful activities will feel that they are abusing the short time they have. Taking on more extracurricular activities can have the same impact. Significance is all about quality over quantity.

7. Success. Success relies heavily on moving toward or achieving personal goals, but is so much more than accumulating material wealth. Successful individuals have goals involving who they are (character), what they do (career), and what they possess (wealth)—and, more than likely, in that order of importance. How do individuals feel who are garnering riches but failing in the personal character department? Financial success could be defined as having enough to meet our own needs and the needs of those we choose to help. This is a worthy financial goal. Career success could be defined as having the opportunity to pursue our career goals. We feel most successful when we are actively pursuing our heartfelt goals. As long as we are actively pursuing personal goals and making progress toward them, we will nourish our sense of success and confidence.

When we myopically focus on money or work or leisure at the expense of other areas of meaning in our lives, we deny ourselves the fulfillment that comes from the seven intangibles that define contentment.

Remember, your life is not about making money—your money is about making a life.