

Living With Intention | March 22, 2005  
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Hello! Welcome to this month's edition of *Living With Intention*. Our goal is to share strategies to help you design a wildly fulfilling and remarkably successful life-on your own terms. As always, we hope you'll share this free resource with others and invite them to [subscribe](#).

What a month! I've been navigating an assortment of wacky escapades, including a doozy of a sprained ankle that I'm nursing back to be better, stronger, faster than before. Ok...maybe roughly the same as before, but that will do. Add to that a truly torturous case of the flu (a curse upon the vaccine shortage!), and I'm finding myself grateful to be on the road to health and well being. More on gratitude in a minute.

I'm looking for a much more creative explanation for how I sprained my ankle than the real story, which is sadly mundane and clutter-related. That being said, I've been offered several new stories to choose from, some plausible and some just entertaining, covering everything from saving children and wounded animals from speeding freight trains, chasing burglars from my home, scaling assorted mountains on a vision quest, coordinating homeland security activities, and running from Brad Pitt's unwelcome (hah!) advances. If you have any suggestions you'd like to add to the list, drop me an email at [Deanna@appliedinsight.net](mailto:Deanna@appliedinsight.net).

On to the business at hand. This issue of *Living With Intention* introduces the notion of gratitude, another powerful topic designed to help you live a life of authentic happiness. Our second article shares proven tips for maintaining focus and maximizing time throughout your day. And, as always, we've included great resources that will make a difference in your life—try a few on for size!



**NEW!** By popular request, we have added a “Saturday Only” registration option for the **Pause & Play Getaway: A Weekend of Fun and Friendship, April 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> at the Coeur d’ Alene Resort** in Coeur d’ Alene, Idaho. This affordable one-day option offers a fabulous array of food, fun, and festivities, including your choice of workshops/playshops, breakfast, dinner, a free gift bag, entries into prize drawings, and all of the laughter and relaxation you can handle. For more information on this new offering, log on to [www.pauseandplaygetaway.com](http://www.pauseandplaygetaway.com). See you there!

Enjoy the journey.



Deanna Davis, PhD  
[deanna@appliedinsight.net](mailto:deanna@appliedinsight.net)  
[www.appliedinsight.net](http://www.appliedinsight.net)

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## Ideas for a Wildly Fulfilling Life...

### World Series of Gratitude

Ok, so I'm sifting through the day's mail in front of the television. I'm hoping to catch a special on Hawaii or some exotic cooking show when I stumble across footage of the World Series of Poker on the Travel channel. What caught my ear were the nicknames the players go by—menacing little power plays chosen to intimidate their opponents. Devil Fish. The Unabomber. Not sunny. Not pleasant. A bit disturbing, in fact.

In serendipitous moment, amidst the stack of bills and junk mail, I uncover two lovely thank you notes from my grandmother and my sister Michelle. Both were hand written on beautiful note cards and sent promptly after whatever gesture I had made that spurred them to express their gratitude.

I thought for a minute how very on the ball they both are. How genuinely thoughtful. How radically different from me, given the fact that my personal track record for sending thank you notes consists of a heartfelt sentence or two written several months after the fact on a coffee-stained post-it note using a broken crayon from my toddler's stash of art supplies, which I mail in a recycled envelope that sits in my purse for two more weeks until I remember to buy stamps. And those are the stunning successes! All right, maybe I'm exaggerating a bit (although not much...ask my family if you don't believe me), I do realize that they have something on me here.

Then I make the connection. There really should be a **World Series of Gratitude**. But instead of going by frightening nicknames, these players would be referred to as "The Gracious Gram" and "Sister Thanks-A-Lot." I could imagine the tournament weaving down to that last, all-important gesture...winner takes all. The commentators whisper "well, it looks like Sister Thanks-A-Lot may have sealed up the competition...she just mailed a hand-written note thanking someone for thanking her for something. She enclosed pictures and an article she thought the recipient might like." The next announcer interrupts, saying "WHOA, Jonesy, in a bold move just moments ago, the Gracious Gram not only called to say thanks for dinner, but she sent a card as well, written on handmade parchment paper in calligraphy, enclosed in an embossed envelope sealed with glitter glue. Viewers, this competition is over. The Gracious Gram holds the title in The World Series of Gratitude."

All humor aside, it's comforting to know that some people have perfected the art of expressed gratitude. They give me something to reflect on, to treasure, and to aspire to. And, not surprisingly, science affirms the fact that these people will live longer, happier, more contented lives than people who don't express their gratitude.

But wait! There's hope for people like me and the rest of the thank you note challenged: gratitude expressed in ANY way makes you healthier and improves your quality of life on almost every level. Whether you're a thank you note connoisseur or whether you get down & get gracious in other ways—verbally, through journaling, or otherwise—gratitude offers a host of benefits you might not have imagined.

Research in the field of positive psychology has shown that expressing gratitude on a regular basis can improve everything from depression to general quality of life, and a lot of things in between. Expressed gratitude has an immediate and lasting impact on our level of happiness and life satisfaction. The best thing about it, particularly for people like me, is that the practice of being grateful doesn't have to be excessively formal or impossibly frequent to yield real benefits for both the giver and the receiver. It's all about the authenticity of intent rather than the elegance of expression. Whew, I feel better already!

Studies show that by paying attention to what we're grateful for we can effectively change how we see the world—kind of like adjusting the lens of a camera, which helps us filter out certain aspects of an image and zoom in on more preferable subjects. You end up with a much more pleasing and meaningful picture when you focus in on what has significance and heart for you. But, as always, research is only as good as our ability to do something with it. So how do you cultivate a practice of gratitude without it feeling overwhelming or uncomfortable or un-do-able? Here are a few tips:

**1.) Keep a gratitude journal.** In my workshops, we call this a "Joy List," on which I ask people to record things that bring them joy and that they value in their lives. Martin

Seligman (author of *Authentic Happiness*) offers an alternative, suggesting that people record “Three Blessings” each day—three things that went well today and why. It doesn’t matter what you call it, it only matters that you do it. Just maintain a simple, brief listing of what you are thankful for.

Focus on the ordinary in the extraordinary, the flotsam and jetsam of everyday life, rather than thinking that your joys need to be “the big ones” (vacations, promotions, degrees, kids, marriages, etc.). 99% of our lives are the sum of everyday miracles of existence—there’s so much to notice there! Start your list with “foundation” appreciation—family, home, food, career, health, or other things that serve your core needs, and you’ve got a great start. Add to those a few little luxuries like a hot shower, your favorite song just when you need to hear it, the smell of dew on the grass, or the sound of children’s laughter.

Don’t ignore the “big ones,” just don’t focus on those things to the exclusion of all the really good stuff! Yes, there will be some of “those” days when you’ll feel like the only gratitude you can express is for not maiming someone or for not being entirely covered in smallpox or something. We all have those days.

But by all means, acknowledge it even if you can’t celebrate it. If nothing else, do your best to be grateful that it’s not worse! The process of recording thankful thoughts captures remembered joy *and* programs you to look for more of it in your every day life. It’s also an indispensable tool for reminding you of what’s good when you’re faced with challenging times or situations.

**2.) Share your gratitude.** There’s also power in the expressing of gratitude, which my sister rightly classifies as both a gift to the giver and to the receiver. There are two levels of expressed gratitude. The first is thanking someone for acts, words, or deeds they’ve done, which helps you bask in the receiving and helps the giver know how much it meant. The second is thanking someone for who they are and what they mean to you, which helps you connect with them on a deeper level. In either case, you can express your gratitude in simple but meaningful ways like a quick phone call, note, conversation, or email to let people know their thoughtfulness was appreciated or that you’re glad they’re alive and part of your life.

When it’s not possible or practical to “do it right,” whatever that may mean to you, just get down to business and do it. So many people don’t express their gratitude because they’re waiting to be able to do it beautifully, elegantly, and completely. So often, it just doesn’t get done because there’s no perfect time. It’s better to get it done than to forever delay it in the hopes there will be a time when you can do it “right.” I’m working on this one myself this month!

**3.) Write a gratitude letter.** When you want to see a mega-boost on your happiness meter, pull out all the stops and sit down to write a gratitude letter to someone who has profoundly influenced your life in a positive way.

Seligman recommends this as one of his favorite gratitude practices. It has an amazing impact on both the giver and the receiver. Just select someone who has shaped your life in a meaningful way to whom you’ve never fully expressed your gratitude. Write a one-page, hand-written letter to that person, sharing your appreciation. Don’t take on too much here—one page is great and not too overwhelming.

Then, Seligman suggests that you laminate the letter and make an appointment to go visit the person and read it aloud to her/him. The boost in happiness levels for both parties can be profound. I have a client who writes a gratitude letter to one person each Thanksgiving; another who does it a couple of times per year when she or the person she’s writing to needs a boost; and another who entirely transformed both her mindset and her relationship with someone she cares for by doing this. However you do it, do it. You won’t regret the time and energy you spend, but you will rejoice in the outcome on many levels.

All three of these strategies have their benefits—some are convenient, some consistent, and some compelling. All of them impact you and those you care about in amazing ways. For instance, research shows that the gratitude letter will “turbo charge” your happiness immediately and you’ll feel the effects for a full month. Studies also show that, when compared with the gratitude letter, regular gratitude journaling has a less powerful *immediate* effect on happiness but it *lasts a lot longer*—a full three months. And expressed gratitude

probably fits somewhere right in the middle. So choose an assortment and get busy getting grateful. Thankfully (pun intended), it's easy and, better still, enjoyable to enter the World Series of Gratitude. There's no entry fee and everyone wins. What a game!

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## Ideas for A Remarkably Successful Life... Maintaining Focus, Managing Time

One topic my clients perpetually struggle with is how to structure their time and focus so they feel less overwhelmed and more productive during their workdays. Over the years I've identified a few key practices that produce enormous improvements in efficiency, outcomes, and a feeling of fulfillment both at work and at home. Here are four to get you started:

✓ **Stop Multitasking, Start Serial Tasking.** Studies by David Meyer, Ph.D. show that multitasking decreases productivity and efficiency by 20-40%. This is even more of a problem when you're switching between tasks that require concentration. In essence, multitasking places a series of speed bumps on your road to success. So, instead of doing three or four things at once (phone, email, paperwork), practice "serial tasking." Do one thing completely and well and then move on to the next. You'll markedly increase your focus, decrease your stress, and enhance your outcomes.

✓ **Give Yourself a Break.** One certain way to compromise your effectiveness is by working through breaks, lunches, weekends, and vacations. The book *The Power of Full Engagement* makes a clear case that "recovery time" is critical to peak performance. Athletes risk injury and burnout if they over-train or over-compete; they need adequate rest to make sure they are at the top of their game. The same holds true for "corporate athletes." You need rest and relaxation to recharge your professional batteries. Take a deep breath, a break, a walk, or lunch with a friend. You'll realize immediate improvements in how you feel and how you work.

✓ **Plan Time to Plan.** Steven Covey says that less than 20% of people begin their day with a plan. If you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you get there? Spend 10 minutes each morning outlining your top three goals for the day and scheduling your time around those priorities. That way, you'll invest your time and energy in the most important activities rather than responding to the sense of urgency that comes from not being clear about what you want to accomplish.

✓ **Divide and Conquer.** My clients universally love a time management system that divides their schedule into three categories. The Strategic Coach Program® names these categories "Free, Focus, and Buffer" days and Jack Canfield, in his outstanding book *The Success Principles*, calls them "Rest and Relaxation, Best Results, and Preparation" days. The concepts are identical. Free/Rest and Relaxation time is entirely free from work—it's what you need to recover and rejuvenate you for peak performance. Focus/Best Results time is when you concentrate on what you do best and what yields the most rewards for you and your company or work. And Buffer/Preparation time is for all of the "to-dos," planning, research, and groundwork you need to do to keep your free time truly free and your focus time truly focused. This approach promotes balance, creativity, and optimal results.

Give one or all of these approaches a try—alone they're powerful but together they make you unstoppable!

### Resources That Will Change Your Life

#### Books

- *Attitudes of Gratitude: How to Give and Receive Joy Every Day of Your Life* by M.J. Ryan. A simple but powerful little book on cultivating an outlook of appreciation and thankfulness. Quick and simple thoughts and suggestions for integrating more gratitude into your life.

- *The Success Principles* by Jack Canfield. One of the best compilations describing the mindset and practical strategies employed by truly successful people. An easy book to pick up and put down, to leaf through for a quick pick me up, or to overhaul your life. You choose.
- *The Power of Full Engagement* by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz. One of my long-standing “most recommended” books for clients who want to enhance energy and focus to achieve a wildly fulfilling and remarkably successful life. A results-oriented book with lots of good examples.

Purchase these books through **Amazon** | [Here](#)

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## Events

**Pause and Play Getaway: A Weekend of Fun and Friendship, April 22-24, 2005.** Join us for an unforgettable weekend at the Coeur d' Alene Resort in Coeur d' Alene, Idaho. From laughter to learning to relaxation to connection...you decide. Do as much or as little as you'd like. Give yourself or someone you love the gifts of time, fun, and friendship. ***If you can't join us for the whole weekend, don't miss our NEW "Saturday Only" option!*** For details and a chance to win a free gift certificate, log on to [www.pauseandplaygetaway.com](http://www.pauseandplaygetaway.com).

## Women Making a Difference... Resources to Help Women Thrive

This month's resources offer different ways to take action on changing your life. Remember, these are not paid advertisements...they're just great resources that I think make a difference for women. Both of this month's resources are located in Eastern Washington (Spokane/Liberty Lake).

### ***Sanctuary Holistic Health: A Wellness Studio***

Gia Carlson, 509.927.4121 or [giacamellia@aol.com](mailto:giacamellia@aol.com)

Gia Carlson offers a variety of exceptional services and products in a wellness studio that I think is a little slice of heaven on earth—relaxing, blissful, and peaceful. Gia has a diverse background in traditional, clinical settings (occupational health) and in a variety of complementary and integrative practices. She has assembled an outstanding assortment of resources that I highly recommend, including wellness assessments and coaching, Far Infrared Sauna treatments, biofeedback using an amazing program called The Wild Divine, relaxation and stress management techniques and tools, aromatherapy, bright light therapy, and air and water purifiers. Gia is a resource I regularly use...and will continue to use...to enhance health and quality of life.

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### ***Life Makeovers Support Group***

Andrea Archer, 509.869.1770 or [andreaa@asaccess.com](mailto:andreaa@asaccess.com)

Andrea recently shared this notice with me, which I'm pleased to pass on to all of you. I'm always thrilled when someone sees a need and creates a resource to fill it. And since research shows that life change is more likely when you travel that road with others, this could be a great tool for you. Andrea invites you to join a *free* Life Makeovers Support Group based on the book of the same name by consummate life coach Cheryl Richardson.

- If you'd like a better life

- If you're interested in connecting with people who are committed to making positive changes in their lives
- If you want to reconnect with your desires, clean up the clutter, and take on the challenges of high-quality living

Then join us for some fun and support!

All the best,



Deanna Davis, PhD  
[deanna@appliedinsight.net](mailto:deanna@appliedinsight.net)  
[www.appliedinsight.net](http://www.appliedinsight.net)

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Published by Deanna Davis, PhD, co-owner of Applied Insight. Deanna is a life and business coach, professional speaker and writer who helps people design wildly fulfilling and remarkably successful lives - on their own terms. Deanna is an admitted laughaholic and a strong proponent of adding chocolate as a key component of the USDA Food Pyramid. For information about her professional speaking and coaching services, contact Deanna at [deanna@appliedinsight.net](mailto:deanna@appliedinsight.net)

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Applied Insight  
104 S. Freya St., Turquoise Flag Building #226-B  
Spokane, Washington 99202