

January 1999

***Keys for Living***  
**This month the key is: *Gratefulness***

There have been a lot of changes in my life over the past year -- some of them fabulous -- and some of them difficult, challenging, and (yes, at times) disheartening. I suspect any one of us can say the same. Yet, I have discovered gratefulness to be a crucial key to surviving, and even enjoying, a lot of life's transitions.

**We cannot always control events and people around us. We can control how we approach life's happenings. I call this living from the inside out.** Our thoughts and attitudes are powerful sources of creation. I have found, time and again, that if I can trust in a larger vision of goodness and love, a force larger than my narrow experience, then I can genuinely say "thank you" for a greater good, even if it is unseen by me. *When I am grateful, then I can trust and ask that something wonderful, beyond my vision, is being created from whatever life brings my way.*

**Sometimes, in the thick of things, gratefulness can be more than elusive.** In less intense experiences, **humor can help.** "Stuck" recently behind a slow, slow driver as I tried to make my way to my office and be on time for an appointment, I had to do a lot of deep breathing and finally, laugh. "OK," I said to myself, "here I am. I can enjoy the ride or I can be frustrated and unhappy." So I laughed, finding gratefulness for this nuisance, believing that maybe I or another driver had been diverted from a serious car accident. *Unseen good is still good.*

Another time I was checking out at Home Depot. Twenty-plus minutes I stood in line, for two small but necessary items to finish a project. Each time I changed lines, another glitch came up in the order of the person checking out. I remember thinking, **"There better be a plan here, because this could be really frustrating!"**

When I finally got to my vehicle, I put my two tiny items in the large SUV I had driven, and watched a young couple beside me unsuccessfully struggle to fit their large purchase into their tiny Ford Escort. We joked with each other about our purchase sizes in contrast to our vehicle sizes. **Then I knew** why my time in line had been so extended! The woman of the couple and I had a delightful conversation as we followed her husband (in their Escort) to their Brookside home, their purchase riding easily in the back of my vehicle.

In meditating about gratefulness recently, I asked, **"Why be grateful?" The answer was moving:** Because whenever we are thankful, the goodness in the situation, however large or small, increases exponentially. *What a powerful thing!?*

**So let me say two things.** First of all, thank you for your past and future support of me and my practice. My heart is full of the joy that comes from doing something I love so fully, and you have helped create that for me! And second, I wish for you many joys, increased exponentially by genuine gratefulness for all that you (and WE) are given!