

Thank You! Thank You! Thank You! Thank You! Thank You! Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

THE APPRECIATION REVOLUTION

*A collaboration project to encourage and inspire
appreciation in everyday life.*

You're the best! You're the best! You're the best! You're the best! You're the best!

About this book:

The Appreciation Revolution is more than a blog post series. It's a movement, an ideal, a mindset. All too often, people take the things and people in their lives for granted. They put off showing their appreciation until something big happens, because they're embarrassed or they think they're too busy. The truth is that we never know what tomorrow will bring, and no one wants to look back and regret how they lived their life.

So, make appreciation a part of your everyday life. Say thank you and tell people how much they mean to you. Congratulate someone on a job well done and recognize their hard work. Use technology to your advantage by sending a text message or an e-mail or a Facebook message. Forget the excuses.

The original guest post series was featured on my blog, Lifeschocolates.com. The series, and this e-book, are dedicated to the memory of my friend, Max Duskin. He was a great person whose life was cut far too short, and someone who I wish I had expressed my appreciation to more often.

What follows is a series of posts on appreciation. They come from a group of amazing bloggers, and each one has a unique perspective to share. To learn more about the contributors, check out the bio section at the end. This book is meant as a guide, a friendly reminder to appreciate all that you have.



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The Introduction

The Appreciation Revolution {Samantha Karol}

We all lead busy lives. Our time fills up pretty quickly with work, school, friends, family, sports, hobbies, fitness, sleeping, eating and much more. There are things that we know we probably **should** be doing, but we just keep making **excuses** and putting them off. What we don't realize is there are quick and easy ways to do and say the **little** things that make a **big** difference.

There is **not enough** appreciation in our world. We don't say thank you, give compliments, draw attention to someone's hard work, or tell people how much they mean to us, as much as we should. I believe in **the importance of appreciation**, and I've been on a mission to urge others to appreciate. But, I'm only **one** person with **one** blog. So, I'm starting a **revolution**. I have reached out to the greatest bloggers I know and asked them to share their thoughts on appreciation. Some will write from a business perspective, some from personal experience, but I know all of them will have something valuable to share.

You may think that you don't need to appreciate people. They already know how you feel, someone else will recognize them for their hard work, you'll thank them the next time you see them. The truth is you **never** know what tomorrow will bring. Remember, it only takes a minute to say thank you, or send a quick note expressing your admiration. But, you don't have to take my word for it. Come back and read the **awesome** posts that will be featured on Life's Chocolates in the weeks to come.

To everyone who is joining me in this revolution: thank you **so** much, I really appreciate it!



Part I: Gratitude and Appreciation Go Hand in Hand



Making the Shift From Resistance to Gratitude {Jenny Blake}

I am overwhelmed with gratitude for my health, my family, my friends, my readers, my possessions and many other things in this world – often to the brink of tears. Today I am dedicating this post to appreciating the less obvious gifts in my life. My hope for all of us is that in addition to appreciating our blessings, we can take a step back and appreciate the blessings-in-disguise too.

I appreciate the days I work so hard I can barely remember to eat lunch, because I feel important, and I enjoy my vacation days that much more.

I am thankful for the chance to lead big, scary projects at work, because it means someone believes in me and because those projects push me to grow in ways I couldn't plan for or predict.

I appreciate my overflowing inbox, because it means my life and work are abundant, and that people care.

I was secretly happy when my car broke down, because it gave me the kick I needed to bike to work and enjoy fresh, cold air every morning.

I am thankful for my 4-month writer's block, because it helped me reconnect with myself, my message and my work.



I am grateful for the low moments in my life;
the moments of despair, sadness, and disappointment,
because they enable me to be more compassionate as a listener, coach and friend.
I am thankful that I haven't seriously dated anyone in a year and a half, because I've filled my time with
incredibly enriching people and projects.

Heck, I even appreciate being whistled, hooted and hollered at,
because one day that will stop.

I appreciate my imperfections,
because perfection is boring.

I am thankful that I don't have everything figured out,
because where is the fun in that?



The Gratitude List: An Exercise to Exercise Appreciation in Your Life {Grace Boyle}

Why does it take nasty, difficult experiences for us to realize what we really appreciate about life? It's like this big slap in the face, and when the sting goes away, we sit back and realize, "oh maybe it's not so bad."

In the past few months, through some recent challenges and life changes I've been going through, I've taken a vow to incorporate appreciation and gratitude into my life, every day.

My mother is a speaker, mentor and transformational life coach, so you better believe I get the 'inspirational smack down' when a piece of my life goes awry. Nonetheless, her wisdom has been integrated (thanks, Ma), and *at least* three times a week, I now write down a list of everything that I am grateful for. We call it "The Gratitude List."

Sometimes I write my 'gratitude list' on a napkin, in my journal or on a loose leaf piece of paper. Even if I'm crying and the tears are falling onto my paper, or I'm tired and frustrated; I will begin to write what pops into my head as a form of release and as an exercise in **appreciation**.

My list sometimes includes: my delicious iced coffee this morning, my loving family, my mother for ~~making~~ encouraging me to write this list, the fact that I can easily pay my bills, laughter, the friendships in my life (on and offline), my job, my health, the trip I just took to Aspen, a roof over my head, my college degree, wine (indulgence is good sometimes), sarcasm, traveling (where I've been, where I'm going), living abroad in Italy, my dance moves, musicians, books, blogging, avocados, the fact that I can write this list...



There is no right or wrong object, thought, idea or person to include on the list. I **always** realize that I have so much more to be grateful for than I ever thought was possible. I think you will too.

So, why not have a go at it? Uncover what you appreciate about your life. It helps me [pay it forward](#) to those who pop up on my list, and I walk away with a smile, my heart full, and my appreciation for life is pulsing through my veins.



Gratitude is Hard for Me Sometimes {Rebecca Thorman}

I'm an extremely lucky person. Really. Sometimes I can't even believe how lucky I am. I have the best mother, best job, best boyfriend, best condo, best everything.

And yet still, I want. I still have that hunger for more. Selfishly, I am often found in dark corners brooding over the infallibility of life, the unfairness, the annoyances, and over that stupid guy who cut me off this morning in the white Dodge Ram with a ladder strapped to the top and a license plate forever seared in my memory. I did not feel lucky that I didn't skid off the road to my untimely death. I just wanted to hurt him.

In retrospect, I do feel grateful, immensely grateful, that when I sped up, tailed, and yelled obscenities at the man in the Dodge Ram, that we were going sixty-five miles per hour and there's no way he could have heard me. I'm grateful that at the last moment I decided *not* to show him the slender nature of my middle finger. I'm grateful that my exit to work arrived before I really gave him a piece of my mind. I imagine – as he well should be – he was grateful as well.

This is the ugly side of appreciation, the not so fluffy and pillowy kind. There are chapters of my life when I am overcome with the sweet and sugary kind, when I am surrounded by rainbows and treats and sparkly revelations. But mostly, I have little patience for swaths of gratitude to envelop me.

Gratitude is hard for me sometimes.



I imagine it's hard for most people, even the big teddy bears of appreciation. It means accepting a whole litany of injustices and bending your eyesight towards what is beating both in and outside of you simultaneously to which, I'm sure, only the heartfelt natures of Gandhi or Mother Theresa have fully mastered. It means not being afraid of the past, the future and the ever-so vast present, because really, gratitude is about living in the now.

So, you could write about the things you are happy for daily – which I do. Or, you could take a moment every Monday morning to reflect upon the previous week, which I do. Or, you could look up at the ceiling occasionally, through the drywall, up through the six floors above you and up to the roof, all the way through the clouds and at the sky and say, “thank you.” I do that too.

Or you could just drive to work like you do every day, embracing the good, the bad, and the dick in the Dodge Ram. Sometimes, that's gratitude too.



Loving the Present Does Not Mean You Have Settled {Jun Loayza}

I recently wrote a blog post about why [I can't do what I'm passionate about](#). After the post, I felt frustrated with my family because I felt like they were holding me back. If only my dad saved more money, or if my brother went to a 4-year university, then the weight of my entire family would not be on my shoulders.

But, as I read through the amazing comments on my blog post, I began to realize how selfish and self-centered I had become. In only two years, I had developed tunnel vision for developing a successful Internet company and living location independently. I was so focused on these goals that I forgot to appreciate what I already have.

I believe that we often fall prey to the “wanting what I don't have” disease. It seems that the grass is always greener on the other side, but **in order to be truly happy, one must learn to appreciate one's current state of being.**

I used to believe that being happy with the present meant settling for less than what I wanted to achieve. I now know that it is possible to have dreams and aspirations, while at the same time, feeling happy about the present.

These are the people that I am thankful for in my life:



1. My Family

I don't know how my family has put up with me for 24 years.

When I had to come home every weekend during the spring of 2006, my Dad gladly drove an hour each way to pick me up from school and drop me off at home. When I decided to leave my full-time job after only three months, my Mom gladly welcomed me back home with open arms. And when student loans weren't enough to pay for rent and tuition, my Mom and Dad gave me an allowance that allowed me to focus on school and not have to get a full-time job.

Without my family's love and support, I would not have been able to take advantage of the opportunities that were presented to me.

2. Kim Ear

Kim has been with me since the very beginnings of my entrepreneurial journey. Since my early days of Bruin Consulting, she has seen me start The Veridical Group, Future Delivery, Viralogy, and many other small projects. She supported me when I left my corporate job, and has never pressured me to get a stable income so that we can move in together.



For two years, she has loved me, even though I've been broke and unable to buy her lavish gifts. I joke with her that the only reason she sticks around with me is because she knows I'm going to be a millionaire someday, hahaha.

I recently had the opportunity to get sponsored by a company and travel the world for a year. Two other contestants were in a relationship and they both broke up with their girlfriends because of the process. Their girlfriends gave them an ultimatum: "It's either this trip or me. Choose!" Kim, on the other hand, was the envy of all of the guys there, because she was the only girlfriend that was understanding and encouraged me to chase my dreams.

Without Kim's love and support, there is no way that I would be where I am today.

3. Best Friends

"Tell me who you hang out with, and I'll tell you who you are."

My Dad burned these words into my brain when I was young, and I have lived these words ever since.

My friends are much smarter and more academically sound than I am. They got better grades in school, are going to graduate school, and have a greater salary than me. Instead of feeling inferior or jealous, their success motivates me to keep up with their accomplishments.



People are always surprised when I tell them that I've never smoked or been to a strip club in my life. The honest truth is that I've never been because my best friends and I just never did it growing up. We'd rather play basketball at the park or watch a movie at the Irvine Spectrum.

Without the love and support of my friends, I would not have the motivation and drive that I have today.



Part II: It's the Little Things That Count



Appreciating Life's Little Moments {Ryan Stephens}

There are big moments, HUGE moments even, that will be ingrained in my brain forever:

- Breaking the district record in the mile in 8th grade.
- Scoring the winning run in the Astrodome to upset the 4th ranked team in the state during the playoffs my senior year.... And the way I felt after knowing I couldn't share it with my parents.
- Breaking up with the only person I truly ever loved, and the unpleasant way I reacted.

I'm grateful for all of these moments. They've made me the person I am today; someone I'm proud to be.

You have these moments too: The way you felt when you finally graduated college, got married, had your first child, lost your first loved one.

Most of us take the time to appreciate these moments for what they are, but here's the thing: These moments are few and far between. Life is made up of millions of smaller moments. Moments that most of us rarely take the time to appreciate.

Moments like when your buddy is giving you a private concert with all your friends around, and you lock eyes momentarily with an old flame across the room.

Moments like the first time a chocolate ganache brownie from Café Lalo hits your taste buds.

Moments like the way a woman rubs her feet against you or squeezes your hand in bed.



And maybe even these are too big. What about moments [like these](#)?

I'm thankful for these moments. I try to appreciate them all; to be fully present for everything I encounter each day.

What about you? Do you take the time to appreciate the little moments in life?



Lives Are Made in These Small Hours {Susan Pogorzelski}

I've been loving this [Appreciation Revolution](#) because I've always believed in showing appreciation for what you have, in telling people how much they mean to you, if only for the simple fact that they may never know otherwise.

But, writing this post has been difficult and, in all honesty, I've been putting it off for quite some time — if for no other reason than I just hadn't been feeling very appreciative lately.

Appreciation always brought to mind serenity, understanding, and happiness. What could I possibly say when life seemed to be taking so many twists and turns; how could I be grateful when I was feeling so discouraged, impatient, and, truth be told, a bit petulant?

I discussed possible topics with Sam, the thought always remaining in the back of my mind, haunting me as new transitions and opportunities came and went. Every once in a while, there was a flash of insight, a spark for which I thought: “this is why I should be grateful.”

I could write about going over to my grandmother's house a few weeks ago, when we spent part of the afternoon together wandering from room to room, where I listened as she told stories and I relived memories that will forever be conjoined with those simple objects scattered throughout the house, scenes from those pictures in their frames.



I could write about how I gained a greater appreciation for what I have in the face of everything else that had been lost. But, I didn't.

Then I thought that I could write about the decision to interview back at a company I had once left in order to pursue another opportunity, and the call I had received the next day from HR, letting me know that they would gladly welcome me back, and the warmth I received upon walking through those familiar doors.

I could write about how grateful I was for this opportunity – this seemingly second chance – when so many others are unemployed and in decidedly more difficult situations than I. But, I hesitated.

I thought I could write about all of the other opportunities I've had; I could write about how grateful I am for my family and their unconditional love, how they, and friends, and this community, has supported and encouraged me through some of my deepest, most emotional times.

I could write about how grateful I am for a wagging tail at the end of a long day, for my health, for my passions, for finding the courage and strength I'd been seeking so that I could turn into a person I've been proud to become.

But, I froze.

Because, honestly, despite all of these things I'm so lucky to have, I hadn't been feeling so appreciative. And because of that, I was feeling guilty. I wanted something more, something bigger. I think I was waiting for something to change so that I could look back and say, "Now I can really appreciate my life."



It's a completely ludicrous thought, and when I really stop and think about it — when I stop wishing for that something more — I realize just how much I really do have.

I think I've always known this; I think maybe I'd just forgotten, so lost in a fog of emotion that I neglected to appreciate what I have right here, right now. I forgot that appreciation is about all of these little things, that what matters are these little moments that make up a life.

It's not about waiting for something bigger, so that you can reflect and say “I appreciate what I had.”

Appreciation starts right here, in this moment.

Because, it's these little moments that count.



A Little Appreciation Goes a Long Way {BlueBelle}

Appreciation is one of those simple things that has the power to put smiles on faces and turn bad days into good ones. Whether it's being appreciated yourself, or passing it on to someone else, by participating, you are brightening someone's life. What could be more worth doing than that?

My job at the moment is part-time, voluntary work for a charity. I love working there, and the people I work with have taught me a lot about the value of appreciation. Every volunteer is thanked for their work every time they visit. Those who give us goods or money are thanked. And, it being a Christian charity, God is constantly thanked for the weather, food, safe journeys, provisions and manpower. This constant appreciation of what we have, always looking on the bright side, makes it an amazingly cheerful, encouraging place to be. You leave feeling respected and valued – and then you come back.

I haven't been in the real working world much, but this has already taught me a lesson that could transfer into any workplace. People perform better, harder, more positively when they are appreciated. One of our volunteers was a chef, and after the rapturous response he got when he first brought food into work, he has continued to do so. We're seriously appreciating his skills.

Appreciation doesn't take long, but it is so worthwhile. An unexpected thank you card letting someone know you appreciated their efforts could not only make their day, it could mean they go the extra mile in the future.



So, my advice, to be added to this Revolution – call, write, text, email, hug, bake – however you want to do it, show your appreciation.



Little Things You Can Do In Less Than 5 Minutes (Thanks to technology!)

- Send an e-card.
- Write an e-mail.
- RT a great blog post or tweet.
- Give a deserving blogger a thoughtful #followfriday shout out.
- Record a video and send it to friends or family who are far away, reminding them that out of sight doesn't mean out of mind.



Part III: Saying Thanks



Thank You Means Not Having to Say Things From a Movie {Elisa Doucette}



Appreciation is as tough to receive as it is to give.

The truth is that as much as we need to give appreciation to those in our lives, we also need to accept it graciously and happily. Like any compliment or praise, we are conditioned to blow everything off with a shrug or excuse. Perhaps it is because we are shy or embarrassed, don't feel worthy of the thanks, or maybe it is just simply because we do not know how to properly handle appreciation.

Ladies, I have an unfortunate truth as well. We are the worst offenders. Like any conversation that begins with the phrase, "do these jeans make my butt look big," appreciation is a dangerous place for our guys to venture. Sure, they know when they do something wrong that flowers are in order...if they do something REALLY wrong, then it should be something pretty and shiny.

Yet with appreciation, they just can't seem to "do it right." If they say something nice, we frequently question their motives. If they make a gesture, then it isn't the right gesture or big enough. Guys are not always the romantic sentimental grand scheming leading men we see on Girls Night Out at the movies. Sometimes they show appreciation by doing things you don't even REALIZE is appreciation, like folding your laundry the exact way you want it while watching a news show that drives you up a wall.



I should also note that “Dinner tonight was good...so much better than the last time you tried to make *insert culinary masterpiece that would make Julia envious here*” is their way of saying, “This dinner was amazing, thank you for all the work you put into it, and I am so lucky to have a girl as creative and talented and hot as you.”

Of course, there is the notion that maybe guys should learn to GIVE appreciation better. However, after millions of years of genetic conditioning, I have a feeling that we might need to learn to co-exist with our male counterparts in the same way that we needed to adapt to other species of life, or that really weird Goth chick we somehow ended up roommates with our freshman year of college.

We’ve been telling guys for years that they need to get more in touch with their feminine side, perhaps it is time for us to get more in touch with our masculine side. Most of the guys I surveyed, in fact, wished that they could just catch a break when they were trying to be nice!

So, the next time a guy is trying to show his love/thanks/appreciation, here are some quick and easy ways to say “thank you” graciously:

- “I’m glad you enjoyed it.”
- “That means a lot to me.”
- “I’m flattered you think so.”

There is also my personal favorite that works for either gender, but it’s super difficult and complicated. Ready? This is earth shattering...



When someone shows you appreciation, smile and genuinely say, “Thank you.”

How do you receive appreciation in your life? Is it gracious, back-handed or a downright act of Congress?



Thanks to the “Invisible” Heroes of Our Generation {Akhila Kolisetty}

Think about it: At this moment, there are thousands – no, millions – of people working tirelessly to make the world a better place. Young people are working endlessly in low-paying nonprofit jobs because they believe so strongly in their organization’s mission. Recent college graduates join the Peace Corps and AmeriCorps in order to humbly offer whatever support they can to impoverished communities. Aid workers are working on the ground in dangerous conflict zones and poor areas, living in harsh conditions, simply to deliver humanitarian relief.

As we’ve seen recently, journalists – like Roxana Saberi, Euna Lee, and Laura Ling – but, also thousands of nameless ones – are risking their lives to provide us with the truth about the world’s injustices. Public defenders, in America and in the rest of the world, are paid little and have to do some of the hardest work out there – defending the accused, who are often guilty – in order to uphold the ideals of a fair legal system for all. Social entrepreneurs routinely quit their jobs to start social businesses that give back to the community, to the world – and most often do not make a profit. And the list goes on: volunteers, social workers, psychologists, public health doctors, and countless more.

Some of these people are famous, but the vast majority of the people doing some of the most grueling, dangerous work out there are not. **They’re not doing it for the recognition.** Most of them don’t own their own domains and blogs, and don’t try to “brand” themselves like we do. Instead, they remain anonymous. While I’m sitting in my comfortable room in Europe, enjoying pasta and bread, these brave people are living in difficult conditions and putting themselves in danger to fight for what they believe in. I know I am immensely



lucky to have what I have, but I think I lack something that these people have: courage. I talk so much about international issues on my own blog, but I haven't actually gone and volunteered in a conflict zone, nor have I ever experienced living in conditions of poverty. I'm not sure I'd ever have the strength to become an aid worker in Darfur, or a Peace Corps volunteer in a remote village. I'd like to think I'm up for all these challenges, but I still think it takes a special type of person to dedicate their lives to such work.

So, I want to send out my admiration and appreciation to all those out there who are working for the public good, to all the people who are serving others without the need for fame or fortune. I think some of these 'nameless' heroes that we haven't heard of are probably also some of the most passionate, dedicated, and kind. I think they deserve all the appreciation they can get, and it's time we said thanks to them for helping make our world a better place!



Brazen Careerist Appreciates You {Ryan Paugh}

A lot of people ask me what it's like working at [Brazen Careerist](#) during a big launch. I never know exactly what I should say. *Mayhem* isn't the right word. But, it's the first word that comes to mind.

Today we launched the new-and-improved BrazenCareerist.com—a career management tool for next-generation professionals. In an online space that's becoming more competitive every day, I'm one part exhilarated, two parts scared to death.

The weeks leading up to this—our biggest launch yet—looked like lunacy. We must have changed our press release 47 times, our landing page ... at least a dozen.

When you're utterly immersed in something, you'll do pretty much anything it takes to make it perfect. And we're pretty confident that we did our best.

Today, I'm pretty thankful. I'm thankful that the site's up, and that even though we may experience downtime, glitches, technical difficulties and beyond, we've gotten farther than most Internet startups even dream. And, we couldn't have gotten here without you.

Almost two years ago, when Ryan Healy, Penelope Trunk and I started building Brazen Careerist, I thought I made a mistake. I quit my job and moved cross-country to a place I never thought I'd be: Wisconsin.



We had no direction, no reasonable way to make any money, and we fought...a lot.

I can't even tell you how many times I thought about quitting. Twice a day even, I'd have my bags halfway packed. My family and friends back in New Jersey were waiting for me, but you all gave us a reason to keep moving forward.

What got me through the worst days was having a community of people that believed in us every step of the way. I chose Samantha's Appreciate Revolution series as a way to say thanks, because I know that the majority of people reading this are people who have given our team support when we needed it the most. So, thank you.

I know that many of us will never meet in person. We'll never have an opportunity to share a couple of beers (though I've been pretty lucky to do that with some of you). Still, I'm appreciative of the amount of yourselves you have all been willing to share with us through Brazen Careerist. I don't know of any other community on the Web that's been more generous than each of you.

Today we're celebrating at Brazen Careerist HQ. We may be celebrating amidst an array of downtimes and fickle glitches with the new site, but it's still a party. And we hope that a part of you is partying too.

Thanks for being a part of everything we've done so far on Brazen Careerist. It's been a pretty awesome journey. We hope you'll continue to enjoy the ride with us.



Part IV: Appreciation Where and When You Least Expect It



Appreciation is About Finding the Silver Linings {Ben Wilcox}

“The best way to appreciate your job is to imagine yourself without one.” – Oscar Wilde

There are many people who have been displaced by the current state of the economy. Recession has been all over the news for months now, but the job losses and heartache are real. In an area that has almost reached 20% unemployment, I am bombarded with it constantly. I also became a statistic of the down economy myself, when I joined the ranks of the unemployed against my will a few months ago. The interviews are few and far between, and the auto industry, where my work experience has been, has shrunk tremendously. The last couple of months have sent me into a quarter-life crisis that has been very difficult to conquer. For me, the ability to concentrate on the positive aspects of life is what has kept me going.

When I think about the positive consequences of my recent job loss, they seem to split into two separate categories. There are the obvious things, like how I still have my good health, or how I am in complete control of the schedule of my day. This gives me the ability to make a trip to Starbucks at 2:00 pm in the afternoon, or take my roommate’s dogs for a long walk when the weather is nice. I love these aspects of my life right now, which has drawn me to work on several entrepreneurial ideas to test in the future. I believe I am headed toward starting my own business almost solely because of how much I have enjoyed being in control of my free time.

The other category of positives includes what I would call ‘silver linings.’ An example of a silver lining would be how much I love my car now, because I appreciate it more having driven an old junky car during my high



school years. These kinds of appreciation are much harder to find, especially in events that seem terrible at first glance. In my opinion, being able to reframe these events is very powerful when attempting to increase your appreciation for daily life.

When I do land on my feet, there is no question I will appreciate it more. I have had a lot of questions and doubts about how I will pay the next month's bills. Whether I am able to string enough freelance checks together, or find a steady paycheck in my new job, I will definitely NOT be complaining about how difficult my job is in the future. I will appreciate the paycheck and hands-on experiences that will come with the new opportunity.

I have a new found respect for my money and how it is spent. Over the past few months, I have reevaluated my spending habits and the actual value of possessions and experiences. I no longer have cable, and have finally kicked the habit of eating out at restaurants just because I am lazy. Every purchase I now make is calculated, and I am always looking for free alternatives whenever I can. I am hopeful that the money-saving tactics I have learned in recent months will remain with me once I find a steady source of income.

I appreciate all of the opportunities that my last position afforded me. During one of my rotations, I took a trip to Mexicali, Mexico in order to observe a plant that made turbochargers for their upcoming engine. Another rotation included an apartment in downtown Chicago and a company car, while working at the assembly plant that built the Ford Taurus. These are both experiences that I would not been able to have, if not for my previous position. I learned a great deal from the year and a half that I worked there, and the experience gained can never be taken away from me.



Most of all, what I appreciate most is the support of my family and friends. Their support has been overwhelming. For the past six months, I have been able to live with a couple of friends for reduced rent, or no rent at all. Other friends have been more than helpful, paying for countless meals and drinks while listening to me complain about my situation. Others still have helped me get my blog to what it is today. It has been a very trying six months for me, and I am certain that I would not have been able to make it through without the love and support of my family and friends. There is no way I will ever thank everyone enough for their help, but I am doing everything I can to show my appreciation.



Appreciating Life's Harshest Moments {Raven Moore}

Appreciation is one of those things more clearly noticed (and valued) in hindsight. Four years ago, my mother wound up in the hospital for 4 months.

In response, I bought a Sara Lee chocolate fudge cake, and ate it over the course of several weeks, while dropping to a size 0. This is probably the only time in history when a woman could, in the most ironic sense, have her cake and eat it, too.

I was over \$42,000 in debt from student loans. And, I still hadn't finished paying off Bates in order to properly graduate (clearing throat...actually, to receive my degree). My father, unfortunately, made it quite plain that the \$8,500 which remained to release my degree, should be paid by me...alone.

Between taking care of my mother and 13-year old sister, I hustled away at one of the most unsatisfying jobs I've ever had for a year and a half. Then, I got canned because my job performance completely sucked since I was becoming less and less adept at navigating my job depression.

So, I was out of work. My mother was still sick, and that pesky \$8,500 gnawed at me day and night. Not to mention, there was the very precocious little sister to look after. For my sanity's sake (and hers'), she stayed with a friend's family for several months while I tried handling the life at home.

Looking back on it – it seems forever ago.



That is the peculiar thing about the past. You end up wondering, “How the fuck did I do that?!” And, sometimes, you really don’t know. And, obviously, I came out of it because I’m still here.

It still kind of drives me wild that it happened.

I remember when I was packing up my belongings after the “canning,” the office manager told me, “I think you’ll be alright.” And I replied, “Well, I’ll have to be.”

Because, duh, what else is there?

During that turbulent year, I spent most of my time being angry or sad or both. No one should cling to anger or sadness. Yet, they are powerful, pure, and raw emotions you should seek to understand and never shy away from.

Anger and sadness are just as vital to your spirit as joy and fulfillment.

They give dreams context.

They make the wavelengths of experience unequivocally more complex and dimensional.

So, why do I tell you this?



All those years ago, I was at my most negative. I wasn't always thinking positive thoughts about myself or the world around me. I had to grapple with confusing and contradictory emotions. Such feelings ranged from petty, immense jealousies over trivial things, to the disappointment of having failed my own (unrealistic) expectations.

What does all that mean?

Even our anger and harshest moments need to be appreciated.

The rudimentary lesson I learned was that I could not take for granted that life will pan out. Or, that I will always get what I want.

Your first job may not be a blazing success. Parents may not always be around. They may even depend on you before you think you are ready. Your little sister will probably not do what you tell her.

You may drive yourself nuts by obsessing over ruined relationships and coming to terms with your own stifling immaturity.

In lieu of all those things, strive to appreciate your life's purpose by embracing its harshest moments.

This involves appreciating what life hasn't brought you as well. Your missing elements of success and satisfaction are placed there by your own expectations, not by life itself.



Most people spend all their lives looking for the one thing they feel they should be doing (or have). But, your life's mission is not one thing, nor should it be. It is several things at once, and they change, mercifully, for the better. You cannot spend 1 year, 5 years or even 10 years looking for that one thing because you'll never stop looking until you stop breathing.

That is probably the single most overwhelming thing about growing up and growing old. When you begin to wonder why life is not quite what you expected, or the things you feel you deserve were taken away – were they so important in the first place?

And, even if you feel that you gained nothing, be appreciative that you came out of it in the end, true to yourself and unscathed.



The Pen Is Mightier Than the Sword {Kristina Duncan}

I appreciate words and the people who use them wisely.

Every day we communicate using words. We are so used to it that we don't even think about it. It has become second nature. Because of this, we have forgotten to respect the power that words can have over others. It is a power that is easily overlooked; most of the time we don't see it. We carry on conversations about mundane topics, the weather, the price of gas, and occasionally some pain is thrown in there (the loss of a pet) or joy (a birth, a birthday, a wedding). The power lies dormant.

But, have you ever said something to someone that you didn't mean, in anger, and see the crushed look on their face and the pain in their eyes? The power reveals itself. Or listen to some of the great speeches from history. Hear the way they speak the words, how they can move people. It doesn't matter what the cause is, whether it is for good or for bad. How they deliver the speech, how they use the words will determine if they can move the people to action. That is the power of words. People need to remember to respect words. For most of us, words are things that we just use as a means of communication. But, those who know how to use them well, who have a respect for the power behind them and don't use words lightly, have my appreciation. We should pay more attention to what we say and how we use our words.

Think before you speak.



I Sure Would Appreciate Another Set of Eyes {JR Moreau}

Perspective is a good thing to have when you need to put the blinders on just to get over a bump in the road. Having people to be there for you, and help keep you balanced and in check, is something I've been extremely grateful for my entire life. Do you ever get so lost in the problem that you forget why you even started down that path to begin with? Maybe you even feel like you've lost a part of yourself that you loved or respected in exchange for reaching an ultimate goal that you decided was worth pursuing. Maybe what you need is an outsider's perspective to help you figure things out.

As many people in the blogosphere will tell you, personal branding is not an easy thing. I found this out in 2006 after graduating college in the beginnings of this nasty recession. To come up with a personal brand from scratch is a confusing and challenging task. Sure, someone who's self-aware and on the right path in life can tell you where he or she wants to be down the road. But, as I found with myself, and as I'm finding with many people I meet, taking a hard look at one's life and really tuning into what drives you sometimes takes an outsider's perspective and a lot of kindness and patience. You know you need a change, but you lack perspective, and pulling it out of thin air can be next to impossible for some people.

I've had friends literally corner me in their kitchen with a white board and a pot of chili and tell me that I'm not leaving until I figure out what the hell I want out of my life. If I had been any more indignant, they probably would have tied me up and put a sock in my mouth, but luckily they sat there and let me ramble and talk about why I hated my job, why I hated searching for jobs, interviewing for jobs and getting rejected for jobs. They let me get all my complaining out and then hit me with the question, "What do you want?"



I wanted change, I wanted a better life, and I wanted it sooner than I could have it because I was spinning my wheels so furiously that I didn't even look down to see that I had no traction. I've never questioned my ability to work hard, but sometimes working hard for the sake of working hard is just ridiculous, especially when the point to which you're working is undefined. I am so grateful for my friends and colleagues who have helped keep me on track with their outside perspectives. It sucks to hear when you're unsure of yourself and caught in a routine of hard work without progress, but after I'm done being defensive and indecisive, I truly appreciate hearing, "Dude, you're not getting anywhere, you sure you want to be going down that road?"

Some people have tried to steer me, and some have tried to dissuade me from what I've wanted, but every single person I've encountered in life who's given me an honest perspective on what I'm doing has helped me more than they know. A friend recently called me "exuberantly optimistic" in the ventures I've taken in life. I honestly do get super pumped up and focused on making anything I undertake succeed. It's a blessing and a curse, an almost comical curse if you ask me. I look like a fool when something I was just certain would work ends up blowing up in my face. But, then when it does work, I realize I've set the bar so high in my own eyes as well as others that all I get is a "congrats, so now what's next?"

I'd ask to be given some slack, but I appreciate being pushed to my limits way too much to take any sort of break from this interesting life I've formed for myself. I just hope that I can repay every person that's helped me, and even some people who haven't helped me so much, by expecting more of them and giving them that extra nudge and bit of perspective that I've always coveted and gladly used.



Part V. The Importance of Earning and Showing Appreciation



Appreciation is Earned, Not Given {Matt Chevront}

I'm a big believer in the sharing of ideas and challenging of one another that guest blogs and community interaction can bring. One has to look no further than the month-long [Inconvenience of Change](#) series at [Life Without Pants](#) as a testament to what a group of innovative, forward-thinking people can do when they unite for a common goal.

Samantha is a rarity in the blogging community – she isn't focused purely on social media, marketing, Gen Y, PR, or anything that you're used to being bombarded with all over the Web (not that any of those topics are bad things – I'm involved in, and passionate, about all of them). Instead, Life's Chocolates stays true to its name – you never know what you're going to get. But, above all, she forces you to take a step back and think – in this case, about what we appreciate in life.

Appreciation can be interpreted in many different formats, but one thing that comes to my mind, and that is relevant to my current life situation, is the appreciation relationship between manager and employee.

Think about your own career – what are you doing with your life? Where are you working at this very moment? Do you feel valued, appreciated, and important to the overall team? Or, are you just another easily replaceable cog in the system? I could easily tell you to go find a job where you're seen as irreplaceable, but more often than not, especially early in our careers, that's much easier said than done.



Give people a reason to appreciate you

No one is going to appreciate you if you don't give them a reason to do so. Presenting your value to a company starts with you. It involves going above and beyond the call of duty and saying, 'This is why I'm an invaluable member of the team. This is why you need me here. This is why you SHOULD be appreciating me and what I bring to the table.'

But, it's not all about you – you have to be appreciative of what you've got. Far too often we say it's "just a job," but there are millions of unemployed people out there who would be thrilled to be in your full-time position. Be grateful for what you have, what you earned, and that appreciation will show in your overall work ethic.

Appreciation isn't given, it's earned. It's easy to forget, but so important to remember. If you want people to see the value in you, you have to live that value in everything you do. The appreciation revolution starts with you!



The Thing About Appreciation {Carlos Miceli}

...Is that it's right there.

You can start doing it at any given time.

There are no qualifications or skills required.

Like breathing, it's still free.

So, why don't we do it more often? Talk about rationality...

Let's be realistic here: the single act of appreciation won't make you feel "happy" about your current situation, especially if it is (what YOU consider) a crappy one. But, it will make you feel better. How is this not incentive enough?

Look around you. There's something to give thanks for in every little thing that you do or have. People, things and experiences, acknowledge them.

Compare. Consider how lucky you actually are compared to (way too many) less fortunate people.



Remember. Look back and think about what you lacked before and have now. (Personal anecdote: I had \$5 in the bank and \$12 in my wallet before getting my first paycheck of my actual job. Being broke teaches you a lot about appreciation.)

Appreciation only takes a moment, but it can last forever.

And if you are serious about it, it will.



A Dedication to the Stranger {Carla Blumenthal}

I sit on my stoop with the warm sun beating relentlessly on my arms and back. My strawberries smile at me as I taste their cool, juicy flavor. I let their juice roll down my lips as I savor each seed and burst of flavor. I feel content. I feel warm. I feel loved.

The concept of food and digestion is a miraculous feat if you think about it. A seed is buried in the earth, and with gentle care from humans and nature, is developed into nutrition for us to eat. Animals produce milk and meat that can be combined with what is produced from the ground. Together, all of these ingredients give us the energy and sustainability to flourish.

But, we do not simply live on food alone. We rely on strangers' skills and efforts to create products and provide services to better our daily lives.

With the past several years proving to be an unstable time in the nation's economic health, there are a couple of things we can internally believe in: a true faith in hope, hard work, and *appreciation*. Our lives are affected by people whom we may never meet, but greatly influence the person we become.

So, I propose a dedication to you, the stranger, whom I may never meet, but who has influenced my life greatly.



Today I have:

- An *appreciation* for the restless farmer who cares for the ground and animals which provide our food, energy, and sustainability.
- An *appreciation* for the social worker who cares for people who need help in our community.
- An *appreciation* for the researchers and doctors who work endlessly to cure our diseases.
- An *appreciation* for mothers and fathers for their often thankless, 24-7 jobs to raise well-rounded citizens who will one day run our government and companies.
- An *appreciation* for community, both offline and online, that creates a sense of belonging and contribution for each person.
- An *appreciation* for educators around the world who teach subjects, and create responsible students and young professionals.

So, today I am grateful for you, the stranger, who uses your skills to better the world and each of our daily lives. Because just as the farmer creates crops that feed the community, and the doctor helps the ill, you deserve appreciation for your daily efforts to better your community.



Appreciating All That We Have {Ruby Ku}

Before I begin, I would like to extend my appreciation to [Sam](#) for inviting me to be a part of the [Appreciation Revolution](#). Thank you for not forgetting me even after I have disappeared from the blogosphere for months.

As I write this, I'm sitting on an Air Canada flight, 30,000 feet above the ground, four more hours until I return home. [Working in Botswana this summer](#) has been an emotional roller-coaster ride for me – challenging, humbling and rewarding all at the same time. While I am still trying to figure out all the lessons I have taken from this experience, I want to share why, after the summer, I am even more appreciative of all that I have.

Those of us in this part of the world take a lot for granted. Really, we take *a lot* for granted. By that, I don't just mean the excessive material “things” that we want. I'm talking about opportunities, self-worth, and dreams.

Since I was little, I was asked the question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Then I was taught to set goals, work hard, believe in myself, and by doing so, I would be able to realize my dreams and achieve anything in life. An education, a career, a loving family and plenty of friends – all unquestionably occurred to me as part of life. However, people I met this summer have brought me to realize what a luxury and privilege it is to be able to think and feel that way.



During the summer, I interacted with OVC (orphan and vulnerable children) who did not seem to care about anything. Not because they were lazy, but because they were never given guidance. Unlike us, basic life skills were never taught to them. Personal development was unheard of. It was harsh to witness them living their lives without goals and dreams, without people motivating and believing in them, without knowing they are all special and could achieve great things. Nobody ever told them that.

I also met students from a refugee camp in Malawi who received scholarship to study in Canada because of their outstanding grades, determination and aspiration. At first, they excitedly told me how precious of an opportunity it was for them to receive a post-secondary education. Slowly, they revealed their worries about not being accepted in a new society and needing to flee somewhere again. They were sad about leaving their parents or siblings behind and never seeing them again. I will never forget the look on one of the student's faces when he turned around and said, "There is nothing I can do. I need to continue my education."

For us, opportunities are abundant and are easily accessible, such that we can afford to do things at our own time whenever we "feel like it." We think we're young and the world awaits us to be explored. We have elders and mentors tell us how proud they are of us. Most importantly, we don't have to flee our own countries, not having a home we belong to, and having to pick between loved ones and our survival.

What makes us truly fortunate people is the fact that we can choose who we want to be and decide what we think is worth living for. So, take a moment to appreciate this freedom, a privilege we "won" at birth.



My Birthday Wish: A More Appreciative World {Sam Karol}

Saturday is my 24th birthday, so I decided to interrupt the [guest posts](#) with some appreciation of my own. [A lot](#) has changed in the past year or so, for better and worse. Change has touched **every aspect** of my life, from family and friends, to where I live and work. It's been a year of [loss](#), anger, sadness, fear and pain, but it's also been a year of new beginnings, happiness and love. I've discovered that **life isn't fair**. Bad things happen to good people. Sometimes a lot of bad things happen at once. There will be times when we feel like the whole world is against us, and things can't possibly get any worse...and then they will. But, the thing is, there's always someone, somewhere, who is worse off than we are, as hard as that may be to believe. Putting things in [perspective](#) is incredibly powerful.

All of this change has caused me to change as well. I've learned that **we have two choices** when it comes to facing life's obstacles: let them defeat you, or take the opportunity to learn and grow. Although I didn't realize it at the time, the most difficult experiences of the past year have taught me a lot about myself and made me appreciate all that I have.

For quite a while, I wasn't sure where I wanted to go with the rest of this post. I probably re-wrote it half a dozen times, unsure of what message I wanted to get across. I was going to list all of the people and things that I appreciate, but I believe that appreciation is something that should be part of our **everyday lives**. It's not just for special days like birthdays, and it shouldn't take a [tragic event](#) to motivate us to take a step back and be grateful.



If you take nothing else away from the [Appreciation Revolution](#), I hope you realize that life is a precious gift. It is beautiful and fulfilling, frustrating and exciting, but it is also unpredictable. So, make **every** moment count, and don't take **anything** or **anyone** for granted. Stop making excuses. Say things like 'thank you,' 'I love you,' 'I appreciate your hard work,' and 'You mean so much to me.' It is my hope that The Appreciation Revolution will not end when the last post goes up, but will continue to live on through all of you.

When I close my eyes and prepare to blow out the candles on my birthday cake, I won't just be making a wish. I'll be taking a moment to appreciate my life, and all of the wonderful, beautiful, people and things that make it all worthwhile.



Connect with the Authors:

Author	Blog	Twitter	Favorite Ice Cream Flavor
Jenny Blake	Life After College	@jenny_blake	Mocha Almond Fudge (with chocolate covered almonds).
Carla Blumenthal	Twenty-Three	@carlablumenthal	Birthday Cake Ice Cream
Grace Boyle	Small Hands, Big Ideas	@gracekboyle	Cherry Garcia
Matt Cheuvront	Life Without Pants	@mattchevy	Mint Chocolate Chip
Elisa Doucette	Ophelia's Webb	@opheliaswebb	Hood Red Sox "Peanut Butter Nation"
Kristina Duncan	Paralegal Associates	@legalninjaKris	Cookie Dough
Sam Karol	Life Is Like a Box of Chocolates	@sameve	A tie btw Cookie Dough + Cookies & Cream
Akhila Kolisetty	Justice For All	@akhilak	Mint Chocolate Chip
Ruby Ku	Time for Change	@rubyku	Peanut Butter Chocolate
Jun Loayza	Young Successful Entrepreneur	@junloayza	Strawberry Shortcake
Carlos Miceli	Owl Sparks	@carlosmic	Banana Split
Raven Moore	The Writerbabe Series	@writerbabe	White Chocolate Raspberry Truffle or vanilla ice cream bars
JR Moreau	JR's Not So Literal	@jrmoreau	Cake Batter Oreo
Ryan Paugh	Brazen Careerist	@paughginney	Strawberry
Susan Pogorzelski	Twenty(or)something	@20orsomething	Cookies & Cream
Ryan Stephens	Ryan Stephens Marketing	@ryanstephens	Rocky Road
Rebecca Thorman	Modite	@modite	Mint Chocolate Chip
Ben Wilcox	Benjamin T. Wilcox	@benjaminwilcox	Cookies & Cream



Thanks for reading!
I really appreciate it!

