GRATITUDE

I say a prayer each day,
because gratitude tells me to.
I hear birds singing,
and find it hard to be blue.
I watch kids playing,
and I have no fear.
I hear music playing
even when I can’t hear.
I close my eyes sometimes
so I can really see
how wonderful life really is
and that it belongs to me.
I have gratitude.

NEW DESIGN
YOU’LL WANT TO SEE

FEATURED STORIES
I’M IN LOVE
DONALD CLARK

HIS NAME WAS JAMES
LINDA JOHNSON

BLESSINGS
JAMES WELCH
Editor’s Note

Gratitude has long been underrated, not clearly defined and given its true credit. True gratitude has a power all on its own. Its two most powerful attributes are how it changes perspective, and spurs one to action while giving space and room for thought, as it lengthens the moments that we cherish so dear. This issue is about the true power of gratitude and what it produces and helps us to see. Let’s travel once again on the pages of Expressions in Recovery and explore this wondrous thing called Gratitude.

Gil Gadson, Editor

Please send your story ideas to bit.ly/EIRSubmissions

It is the mission of Expressions in Recovery to promote hope, faith and a belief that together in this journey of healing and growth, of recovery and resilience anything we strive to achieve is possible.

To facilitate this mission, this newsletter—your newsletter was created. This forum was created by and for those in recovery to give a voice to our concerns, hopes and talents.

Rules for Submission
If you are interested in submitting a story, commentary, and/or poetry for inclusion in our next issue, please use the online submission form: bit.ly/EIRSubmissions.

Art, poetry, prose, true or fictional stories are welcome. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide hope, faith and information. In keeping with the spirit of this endeavor all contributions must be free from profanity and vulgarity.
**FAITH**

When I think of gratitude, I think of faithfulness, happiness, a smile and a giddy spirit. I think of a belief in a higher power who deserves all of our gratitude for making dreams come true. I think of life itself, and my gratitude is the fuel that keeps this fire burning because it keeps me believing that things will, and can, always get better.

Rev. Michelle Simmons

**A DIFFERENT OUTLOOK**

Gratitude gives you an outlook at things previously unseen and unappreciated. Action speaks louder than words, and I believe true gratitude moves you to action and makes you want to do things. Some of our best leaders were inspired because they were grateful to God simply for life, and gratitude moved them.

Darryl Jones

**A BETTER PLACE**

I attend a place called “The Well.” There are a number of significant groups here that I like and are important to me. However, there is a group called “Gratitude” that really helps tie everything together and anchors me. This one particular group helps me to see and accept that life goes on and that I can progress. Gratitude for me is the fabric that my life is sewed upon.

Celina Smith

**JUST FOR TODAY**

I’m in love with recovery, I never knew that recovery could be so much fun and so exciting. I wake up each day happy and excited about the day before me. I have a new lease on life and my sponsor told me it’s because I have gratitude. It has changed the way I see everything now.

Kevin Smiley

**GRATEFUL**

Gratitude makes you appreciate people more. It contains a spiritual uplift and makes you want to do more for others. Gratitude is a day-to-day humbling experience of God’s presence in my life. Gratitude gives me the ability to often re-start my day, week, month and year with family and friends. What gratitude does to my state of mind is helping me be selfless and do intentional acts of kindness. Thank God for the gift of grace and mercy as he continuously allows me to be who I am—and that is a grateful person.

Shawn Anderson

**SUNSHINE**

My mother calls me her sunshine, she says it’s because every time I come through her door, I do it with a smile and a cheery disposition. In truth, my gratitude for her, still being here the way that she is, keeps me smiling. You see, my mother is 91, sharp as a tack, as hip as any of us, and very funny, witty and brilliant. I am so grateful that she is still here and that we can still have some of the most extraordinary conversations I have ever had with anyone in my life, and I always leave her feeling renewed, stronger, full of purpose and most of all… loved.

By whatever powers that be, she got to see me clean, productive and relatively happy and now she adds even more by honoring me and calling me her sunshine. How can I not have unlimited gratitude.

Gil Gadson

**HERE AND NOW**

My mother calls me her sunshine, she says it’s because every time I come through her door, I do it with a smile and a cheery disposition. In truth, my gratitude for her, still being here the way that she is, keeps me smiling. You see, my mother is 91, sharp as a tack, as hip as any of us, and very funny, witty and brilliant. I am so grateful that she is still here and that we can still have some of the most extraordinary conversations I have ever had with anyone in my life, and I always leave her feeling renewed, stronger, full of purpose and most of all… loved.

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Gil Gadson
I'M IN LOVE

I'm in love with recovery. It's not just the fact that I'm recovering and staying clean it's the true beauty of a full and rich life. Every second of every day, I'm truly grateful and as a brother of mine said, "Gratitude is an action word" so every day I go out and help people. I'm so grateful. I get goose bumps in the morning just knowing that my higher power has blessed me with another day, and given me the honor and opportunity to go out and experience a life that I never had before. I have fallen in love with people. Big or small, short or tall, happy or sad...it doesn't matter.

Gratitude lets me see past the scars, and just love the human being and often see who God made them to be even when they don't see it themselves. I have resources, good people, goals – both big and small, mentors, and positive, constructive things to do each and every day. And all these started coming to me through the power of gratitude. My gratitude lets me see things that I refused to see before. It causes me to look deeper and not judge. Today, I don't want no drama, I don't want no trouble, I don't want to argue or fight. I just want to laugh, to love, and to be of service when I can.

Gratitude for what has been given to me so freely has made me fall in love with life itself.

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Donald Clark

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HIS NAME WAS JAMES

I'm really fortunate. I used to be a person who often saw the negative in everything, and I trusted no one. I've been married four times and just when I thought it was hopeless, God must have sent his very best. I met a man who not only endured my tirades, my outbursts and unfounded anger but he countered it with kindness, with patience and gentleness. He also tolerated things that would make some men resort to violence, another woman or just simply leave you.

Instead, when I'd do things like run up behind him and jump on his back, trying to provoke him, he'd wait and then simply ask kindly “Are you finished?”

When it was necessary that he talk to me about my actions and their effect on him and our relationship, he framed it in love, his hope and belief for us; always including the things he liked and loved about me. When I'd ask him, ‘Why did he still love me?’ he'd bring tears to my eyes as I'd look through his loving eyes while he'd gush about the beauty of my laughter in his ears. He'd touch my face and tell me how beautiful I was. He'd tell me that every time he touched me, it was like the first time ever and over again. He'd tell me things I did that he admired.

He'd tell me how he trusted me and then he'd tell me how much he loved and needed me, and that he was still excited being with me every day. James would call me from work and tell me to pack a bag because we were going away for the weekend, totally ignoring and just like saying, 'Listen wife, why not? Now pack that bag! I'll be home in a few minutes and I love you baby.'

He would send me flowers on a Monday just to start my week. He would send me cards through the mail at any time just to say he loved me, and most of all, he always gave me his full attention. He changed and healed me. Through his extraordinary love, I am better for the rest of my life. I didn't mention that I have a physical illness called, Sarcoidosis, that could be lethal and that lesser men would be all thumbs and panic, trying to deal with it – but not my James. He was my champion.

James died a few years ago from cancer. When he contracted it, we were the perfect couple. We always dressed to impress and everyone said that we always looked like we were on our honeymoon because we were deeply in love each and every day. Once James got sick, we both went into battle mode. Our life together was too rich; we couldn't give up without a fight. Once, because of the treatments weakening James’ system, he contracted pneumonia. The doctors said he could die but James called me to his bedside and told me not to worry; that he was coming home because I was not ready for him to leave yet. I really wasn’t, and he did come home.

We did everything modern medicine would allow but the cancer had taken root and so he came home to be with me for whatever time we had left. I went to the store one day and I could feel it before I walked in the house. I knew he was gone. Sadness is a poor word for what I had felt that day. Instantly, it felt like half of me was gone.

But James had taught me some things through his unwavering and unconditional love. He had taught me the true meaning of being grateful. I’m so unbelievably grateful knowing I had a love that people would die for. I had a love that every woman dreams about. I have memories and stories to tell forever, and gratitude paints a smile on my face every day when I think of him. Do I miss him? Absolutely! Each and every second. But, I survive and thrive with no bitterness because the power of gratitude won’t let me.

My James is with me every day. Fond memories keep him close.

Linda Johnson
BLESSINGS

I’ve made many mistakes in my life, and life itself has handed me many bad days. I’ve been at the peak of recovery and got a bright idea to go do something stupid and spent the next few years in prison. Sometimes there are things missing in our lives and it takes us a little bit more time than we expect to find what’s missing.

Along the way I’ve met and become friends and brothers to some extraordinary people. Almost eight years ago, I was new to recovery but I was committed. Not only was I in treatment at The Net but I was also involved with an organization called “Back on my Feet.” This organization used jogging as a treatment tool for the homeless to restore our self-esteem and inspire others. I was doing great, looking good and totally optimistic about my future – and then life showed up and my mother died. I was devastated. There was this one man at The Net who was also a Peer Specialist who had always encouraged me and believed in me. I stopped by his office just to talk and this man opened his heart. He reminded me about how well I had been doing. He reminded me that my mother got to see me clean and doing better than ever, and was proud of me. He painted this beautiful picture of the future saying that anything was possible. I remember saying to him that I was frustrated that day because I had a lot of running around to do and I only had a couple of tokens. I wasn’t asking for anything or trying to throw a hint. It was well-known anyway that staff could not give us money or gifts under any circumstances because of ethics. Without missing a beat, this man got up, closed his office door, went in his pocket and gave me some money as he said “Look man, you can’t tell nobody about this Bro, I just don’t want you walking around feeling frustrated and helpless. You’re in enough pain losing your mom and you shouldn’t have to worry about getting around today so take this money, don’t say ‘no’ and get going-go take care of your business.” Of course, my eyes had tears in them and I wanted to tell this man that, ‘I loved him’ but he made me stay focused and I left that day to attend to my business. Since that time I’ve fallen once and even went to prison but I’ve bounced back and that man who helped me years ago is still my friend and is still encouraging me. The recovery house that I’m in just elected me to be their new House Manager. I didn’t ask for this position. It was given to me.

So many things have saved me. I have met so many incredible people along the way. I have received so many blessings, and I feel stronger and stronger every single day. I smile each morning now because true gratitude has made everything absolutely beautiful.

James Welch
HOPE AND BELIEF

I believe there's truth,
and truth is what we can all believe.
I see life everyday –
in spite of death...
I see smiles everywhere –
in spite of frowns.
I see hugs and kisses
in spite of wars and violence.
I believe in peace,
and I hope that love and gratitude guides us all.

Lamarr Cooper

THE SECOND HALF

I thought I knew a kiss
until I saw I missed
her smile.
And when I held her hand
for me there was no plan –
I just held it... for a while.
Now... I'm in the second half
and these days when I laugh
it's from my soul.
I now look at the sun
taking a walk...
I don't wanna' run
these days I feel so whole.
A kid said... "you're 53?"
I said, "Yes, and as happy as can be."
I don't think he believed me –
because my eyes sparkled. You see...
I'm in the second half.
I know things the young don't know
and if they would ask
I'd gladly tell them so –
of the wonderful ebb and flow
that the second half lets you know.

Anonymous

INSIDE MY HEAD

I happily get lost when I read stories,
the stories of us all.
Mans' triumph, his love, his heartache and his fall.
I go places in books that I've never been –
and let people I don't know inspire and send.
me to places I should go and let me pretend...
I am he... or she, in their where or when.
Words sing and dance inside my head,
they propel me in and out of bed
they give me things I may say or have said,
as colors change from blue to red.
As flowers blossom inside my room
and tales of life end too soon.
In these tales, I listen and learn.
I search, I question and try to discern,
the meaning and reason for us all...
and why some rise while others fall.
The lessons learned are many
some hard, some soft
some brutal, some beautiful –
that take me off... to faraway places,
but then take me there, or so it seems.
One day soon, with nothing to do
let's go on a trip, just me and you.
Let's share who we are...
and with no shame,
I'll show you my heart...
and pray you do the same...
soon.

Anonymous

EXPRESSIONS IN RECOVERY

I was about 14 years old. My mother had just
moved us from Brooklyn to Daytona Beach,
Florida. Even though I complied, I was furious.
I was a city boy through and through. Girls
were beginning to like me and I felt like I was
just finding my place among the fellos. My
older brothers and sister were all grown and
on their own. It was just my mother, me and
my always angry sister. I was now sort of the
man of the house, so I tried to be responsible
and not let my mother know how miserable
I really was. One stunningly beautiful Florida
morning I sat up in bed, turned to my left and
looked out the window. Within reach, outside
my window were honeysuckle flowers. To
those who do not know, these trumpet shaped flowers have nectar at
their base that is as sweet as honey.

Perched on one of these flowers was the most beautiful and exquisite
hummingbird. I loved animals of all sorts but being a city boy had
allowed me to only see basic insects and animals at the zoos. Now, here
was one of God's most ingenious and beautiful creatures literally within
reach. Every time this bird shifted, it's iridescent plumage changed hue
and color as it shimmered – reflecting the brilliance of the sun. The
Hummingbird's wings were a blur as it hovered, shifted, darted, rose
and fell in the blink of an eye.

In that moment, my loneliness, my wanting, my misery and doubt faded
away. In its place, hope came in. Curiosity for my surroundings started
to occupy my mind and every day I'd take walks and explore. A belief
that being where I was for a reason took root and my eyes began to see
every experience and thing differently.

This was all due to gratitude. I was grateful for the Hummingbird; I
began to be grateful for the sun showers that I had never seen; nature
up close and a life that had slowed to a pace that allowed me to smell
even the freshness of a morning rain. Gratitude was teaching me to
appreciate the beauty of life itself.

Gil Gadson, Editor
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We believe everyone has a right to realize their fullest potential to determine their own destiny within their community, fully recover from mental illness or addiction, and use strength and resilience to overcome adversity.