

129 Reasons to Be Thankful by Mary Vinnedge of Success Magazine

What are you thankful for? We ask. Achievers answer.

Did you ever experience one of those awkward Thanksgiving moments when everyone at the feast was expected to express gratitude? If so, you probably felt pressured to be articulate, original, genuine and grateful in the extreme. In front of aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents and friends, you might have tripped over your tongue when—depending on your age—you muttered appreciation for the holiday pies, your pet, that day's gathering of loved ones, national freedoms, and so on.

Well, SUCCESS turned the tables on folks of various ages, occupations and accomplishments by asking them to respond to that same question. (And, heck, we did them a favor: Study after study has shown that expressing gratitude is a surefire boost to one's sense of fulfillment and also helps maintain a positive outlook.) They shared the following insights, and we hope they prompt you to count your blessings.

Tony Robbins

Speaker, life coach and personal-development author

I am grateful for grace, which comes in so many forms...

For the insatiable hunger to learn, grow, give, serve and make a difference that permeates my life and soul. For the love of my magnificent wife, my family and my dear friends: Love is life's greatest gift, and love is what feeds my spirit and fuels my mission. For God's constant love and guidance in my life. For health, vitality, energy and strength, which make life passionate—and possible.

I'm grateful for the ability to laugh easily and deeply through all of life's offerings. For the grace to live in a time when the opportunity to serve is unlimited and the path of self-education is open to anyone driven to find the answers to life's most important questions.

I'm grateful, too, for all of the pain and problems that have come as well as the power that they unleashed in me to grow and become more. For economic prosperity, which offers both privilege and the sacred responsibility to serve those in need.

I am deeply grateful for my partners, employees and all those who work with me to change lives every day around the world.

Michael Connelly

Fiction author

I'm thankful that every year my entire extended family—all 23 of us, young and old alike—are together on Thanksgiving. Six brothers and sisters with spouses and children far-flung across six states come together without fail. The reunion is the glue that keeps us all close, allows us to share experiences and ideas, and inspires us all to do good things so we can report back on them next Thanksgiving. This year we'll be in Nashville, next year probably somewhere else. It won't matter where as long as we are all there.

Cindi Bigelow

President and CEO, Bigelow Tea

I try to remind myself to be grateful every day for so many things: Being a woman and living in this country. Having the opportunity to run this little jewel called Bigelow Tea. For my family. For my friends. For my community.

Kathy Bates

Actress

I am immensely thankful for my oncologist, who saw me through two battles with cancer with honesty, humor and grace. My doctor who is helping me live with lymphedema. I am humbled by the opportunities my career has afforded me. The extraordinarily talented individuals I continue to have the privilege of working with. My close abiding friends and family who enrich and sustain my life—after every knockout, they reach down and pull me off the mat! And now, through The Lymphedema Education & Research Network, I can give my gratitude for all of this abundance to help make a difference in a community greatly in need of support.

Dr. Phil McGraw

Psychologist, TV personality and author

- An occupation where I often have the opportunity to feel as though I have contributed something to others/given something back
- A job/lifestyle that affords me the opportunity to spend quality time with my wife and family
- Good health: It is much easier kept than regained. I'm just happy to be on this side of the grass
- My good dog Maggie
- Crisp bacon

Jay Pharoah

Comedian and Saturday Night Live star

My team. I have folks who look out for me at every turn. That's the key to not only my success but success in general. I have been surrounded with positive energy and kept away from negativity for the most part. When I say team, I don't mean just my agents and management. I also mean my family, my co-workers and personal mentors. In my small circle of trust, a nucleus of help dwells—and that's my team.

Mary Higgins Clark

Fiction author

I am thankful for so much. How do I thank thee? Let me count the words: first, my faith, which has sustained me over very difficult times. My husband and family, without whom I am nothing. The friends I have loved over all these years. The gift of being a storyteller; I can't imagine not being a writer. The joy of being born in this incomparable country—how blessed all Americans are!

Seth Godin

Entrepreneur, marketing specialist and author (books include Linchpin, Tribes and Purple Cow)

Progress. Because more than the gifts we already have, it's the hope (and sometimes, even the expectation) that things are going to get better that gives us the fuel to dare and the courage to leap. This is the progress of a mom teaching her child, a scientist dreaming of her new discovery, or the incremental advancement of a world based on civility and trust.

Margaret Cho

Comedian and actress

For my family and friends and, of course, my wonderful fans who have supported me through my career, which has lasted over 30 years! My home is fairly modest, but it's very beautiful because it is filled with love and the best dogs in the world!

Mark Victor Hansen

Author of *The Miracles in You* and co-author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*

I am truly thankful that I have forever fallen in love with my soul mate.

When I divorced a decade ago, I was despondent, depressed and disenchanted. I wrote down 267 attributes, qualities, values, virtues and characteristics that I would love to have in my perfect wife. To my delight, Crystal, now Mrs. Crystal Hansen, was 267 out of 267.

Even though I am a lifelong goal-setter and -getter, the task seemed impossible. However, the Bible says, "Write a thing and make it clear and it shall be established unto you." In hopes of inspiring others to make their lists, if they're single, here's my part of my future soul mate list: similar values, great personal strength, totally loves me and demonstrates it, is happy/has a happy countenance, and has deep spiritual practices.

I am profoundly thankful for Crystal, the greatest thing that has ever happened to me. We are together, more or less, 24/7/365. We love, admire, cherish and revel in each other's presence. I live in a state of absolute gratitude.

Jennifer Ryan Crozier

Vice president, IBM Global Citizenship Initiatives

I am surely at one of life's peak moments right now, with so much to be grateful for. My husband, David, who reminds me that family and fitness come first and who catches me if I "lean in" too hard and start to topple over. My parents, having spent their careers helping veterans and students and pregnant women, are now traveling the world and literally climbing mountains together. And as a parent myself, I'm pretty sure that my two children are the most amazing little people on earth. I'm tremendously lucky that when I go to work, I know they are in the hands of bright, capable, loving people. And if that's not enough, I get to work with ridiculously brilliant people every day at IBM, using technology to tackle some of the world's toughest challenges—urban infrastructure, public health, climate change and more. I'm also grateful for all the women in generations before me who fought to make this life possible and for my opportunity to pay it forward.

Suze Orman

SUCCESS columnist and personal-finance specialist

I am most grateful for having that which money could never buy: finding true love 15 years ago. Kathy Travis is my spouse, best friend, business partner and love of my life.

Tracy McCubbin

Co-founder of OneKid OneWorld

Being able to explore new parts of the world and for the work I do with OneKid OneWorld [an international organization helping children in need]. It's taken me to magical places, countries and villages that I otherwise never would have seen. I am thankful for all the amazing people I have met in these places: teachers who devote their lives to children who would not have had an education if those teachers didn't show up every day, and children who walk miles to attend school each day. I am thankful for every donor who hops on planes with us to meet the people that their generosity empowers. And coffee, I am very thankful for coffee.

Lorenzo Lamas

Actor

This season makes us appreciate individuals in our life who matter. That's important, especially in a world where many people forget that the climb up the ladder to success is rarely accomplished alone. To this point, I'd like to quote famed British journalist Godfrey Winn, who stated, "No man succeeds without a good woman behind him. Wife or mother, if it is both, he is twice blessed indeed." I happen to have a great mom, Arlene Dahl. Through the ups and downs of a varied career, my mom has been my biggest cheerleader. I also have a great wife, Shawna Craig. She accepted my proposal for marriage at age 23 against all common sense and advice from friends. She has taken on the responsibility of raising teenage daughters who are not her own at the cost of not being able to pursue her life goals. I'm most thankful for these two special and remarkable women this holiday season.

Michael Gorton

Founder of Principal Solar and TelaDoc

My parents, who instilled an indomitable spirit that not only does not know how to quit but is laser-focused on turning negative situations into good ones. There is a great but little-known biblical parable about Beniah, who came face to face with a lion. Turning a negative into a positive, Beniah charged straight at the lion, startling it to flee. Often in life, we are faced with impossible odds, and how we handle them defines the path of our lives. My most recent example is my 8-year-old son being diagnosed with a very difficult form of leukemia. Not only have we taught Lance how to deal with treatments over the last two years, but we have inspired him to become a big advocate for organizations that raise money for childhood cancer. Turning negatives into positives clearly can raise the level of your ultimate destination, but focusing on the positives necessary to get there improves every minute of every day.

Les Brown

Motivational speaker and personal-development author

I am grateful for my health. I am grateful for my family, and I am grateful to speak into the lives of others.

Della Reese

Singer, actress and minister

For my mother, who handled all seeming problems, lacks or needs with God. From her I learned that same God connection and brought it into both my personal and professional life.

For instance, *Touched by An Angel* was a show that nobody thought would last past the first few episodes. The crew and many of the cast were kept on edge not knowing if they would be working next week. Remembering my mother's best friend, God, I simply reassured them the show would last and be the biggest hit, as God had designed it to be. Nine years later as we were wrapping up the series, several crew members came up to me and said, "You knew the show would last and be a hit. How did you know?" My answer was and is, "It was a God thing. I just had to keep believing that God would handle it, and He did."

Try it. It works.

Farooq Kathwari

Chairman, president and CEO, Ethan Allen

I am grateful to live a balanced life that allows me to lead an iconic American brand, be involved with many humanitarian causes, and spend time with my wonderful family and four marvelous grandchildren, whose ages range from 1 to 5.

Kim Pittel

Vice president, sustainability, environmental and safety engineering, Ford Motor Co.

We are in the midst of an exceptional time in the automobile industry. I am grateful to be a part of a company that is working to redefine what mobility means for people and contributing to a better world at the same time. Every day I come home to my husband and daughter, both of whom inspire me daily and keep me grounded. I also am grateful to be surrounded by a supportive network of friends to help balance my work and personal lives.

Arianna Huffington

Founder of The Huffington Post

The people in my life, including those who are no longer here. I'm thankful for my mother, whose favorite saying, "Don't miss the moment," was the very embodiment of gratitude. For my daughters, Christina and Isabella, and my sister, Agapi, lifetime members of what I call my "thrive tribe," who are always there for me, whether I succeed or fail. For every member of our growing international HuffPost family. And for all the people I've met as I've gone around the world in the past year, of all ages and from all walks of life, who are coming to realize that there's more to life than climbing the ladder, that we are more than our résumés, and that we have it in our power to live our lives with more meaning and more purpose.

Dolly Parton

Singer, songwriter and actress

For any and all talent that God has given me. That I have lived to see my childhood dreams come true. For every single person who has ever helped me achieve my dreams. For my fans.

And I'm thankful that I'm still around, stirring up new dreams every day.

Jack Canfield

Chicken Soup for the Soul co-author and speaker

My 2-year-old grandson, Ozzie. Only Oran, the oldest of my three sons, has found the love of his life and settled down. So I wasn't sure if I would ever have a grandchild, which I very much wanted. Yet after Ozzie

was born, I told Oran that I didn't want to be called "Grandpa" because I didn't feel that old. Kyoko, Ozzie's mother, told me that the Japanese word for grandfather is ojiisan, and thus I became the elder of the three O's—Ozzie, Oran and Ojiisan.

I love little Ozzie's indefatigable energy. He is always happy, laughing, totally curious about everything, and reaching out to everybody, including strangers, ready to connect and have fun. I know it is a cliché, but when I am with him, he brings out the kid in me. On my most recent trip to Brooklyn to visit him, he invented a game that I found myself caught up in, where whatever sounds and movements he made, I was to instantly imitate him. After 45 minutes of his unbridled creativity, I felt the pure joy of being a totally uninhibited 2-year-old again and laughed uncontrollably.

Sometimes it takes the unconditioned spontaneity of a child to reconnect us to our own inner essence. I am so very thankful for those precious and unexpected joy-filled moments with Ozzie, whom I treasure so much.

Wayne W. Dyer

Personal-development author and speaker

I spend a minimum of an hour each day in a state of pure gratitude for the I AM presence that is within me and surrounding me at all times. I give thanks to this infinite nameless presence that is pure love without any opposites. It is oneness, indivisible, impersonal, and when I sense it in the indivisible silence of my thanksgiving meditation, I know what it means to be in this world, but not of this world.

I am in awe of this infinite invisible presence, and I am exceedingly grateful to be one with it.

Editor's note: Dyer, ill when he shared his thoughts in late June, died Aug. 29. His insights and lessons will be missed.

Heidi Klum

Model and TV personality

I'm thankful that I work in industries that were so supportive of me during my pregnancies. I was able to model on TV and even on the runway with a giant belly, and everyone on Project Runway was very understanding of my needs. They were amazing.