

THE SET FREE LIFE

Even Though it Didn't Feel Good at the Time

Almost every family/friend gathering at Thanksgiving tables across the country has its own "giving thanks" ritual: some offer a prayer or prayers, some go around the table and speak gratitude for a particular blessing. I'd like you to consider a twist: express thanks for something that did not seem a blessing at all when it occurred. Give praise for what you thought would kill you. Lift up your hands before all who matter and proclaim that something meant to destroy you has been the portal to a new way of thinking, living, or approaching life.

It's nearly impossible to do this if you're still limping from an unexpected blow, so your gratefulness may not apply to an incident or season still fresh with the sting of trauma. If you lost your job last week when you didn't know you were being targeted for layoff, or your kid totaled the car three months ago and you're still negotiating the often frustrating use of public transportation, this may not be the exercise for you.

Some of you reading, however, know what I'm talking about. You caught the spirit of my second paragraph immediately and you know exactly where to go with this. Your thanks rise spontaneously from the passage of enough time to have you fully cognizant of how important, how significant, how only-now-viewed-from-a-distance *precious* and *valuable* is the result of your rotten experience.

It doesn't have to be something that happened this year, or last, or the one before; often it takes a good long passage of healing time to hit upon the truth that what caused us seemingly insurmountable pain became an Everest to scale, showing us what we were made of. We found out we had something of which we were completely unaware—be it a talent, friends, a hidden resolve, a path that had been waiting for discovery.

My husband left his work many years ago to come to Delaware (I had gone ahead for a new job) and found he hated it. He was unable to find employment in his field and was convinced he had ruined his career. He felt unproductive and angry. During a year-long plunge into a dark abyss, he found some comfort in staying up half the night, teaching himself graphics programs that challenged him and took his mind off his frustration. Fast forward

x-number of years: he now works as a freelance designer and creator of websites, newsletters, and promotional materials (including this newsletter and my website). He had an eye for color, structure, and excellence he might never have nurtured. He says today, "I'd have to be paid a million dollars to go back to the corporate world." His time is his own and he's doing something he enjoys with a talent he might never have uncovered had it not been for a situation that hurt like hell when he was going through it.

I grew up in a family buffeted unendingly by the destructive behavior of my brother and his various addictions. I watched two very generous, kindhearted parents with limited understanding and even more limited resources wage a battle of futility in dealing with him. I hated the whole sinking mess of it and left home the moment I could rent an apartment on my own. It took decades to face the onion-like layers of truth about myself and about them, and the necessity for forgiveness, but I am a person set free today by the accomplishment of survival. I'm continually astonished with the ability I've been given to look back with gratitude and see how that experience made me what I am today. I went for a Master's degree in psychology because of it. I wrote a book about it (*The Prodigal Brother: Making Peace with Your Parents, Your Past, and the Wayward One in Your Family*). My business theme is centered on setting people free because I am firmly convinced of the prize of seeing the potential and ultimate results of our heartaches, whether they are business or personal (and we know they are usually always both) and how they often make us better in both arenas.

So this year—consider making it an annual ritual—give thanks for *all* things that have enriched your life, not just the obviously good.

Develop an expectation of dark tunnels that will have you wondering as you enter how you'll end up explaining the benefits at the next Thanksgiving feast. It will remind you that while you were going through, the tunnel was dim, but the train stayed on the tracks after all, and here you are. 🌱



Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her work on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused companies and business organizations throughout the country to value her consulting skills. She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.

Quick Links

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Sue@SetFreeLifeSeminars.com

www.SetFreeLifeSeminars.com

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Teddy Bear Says...

Teddy Bear is always intrigued by people who do not think there are reasons for looking good, speaking right, presenting before others well, dressing as though they deserve to move up the professional ladder, exhibiting proper manners when dining, and being a person of thoughtfulness and influence. Few you meet will be psychic geniuses, able to look into your eyes and discern you are a person of quality who can be indispensable to a company's bottom line. What you do is almost as important as who you are, because you must *show* who you are. People can't simply discern you've got something to offer. They have to see it and feel it! You are more than your resume, and it's the "more" that makes you memorable.



Picture this: three restaurants in a row on a street in a quaint little town. The first has bright and interesting things in the windows, there's a welcome mat in front, the lighting is inviting, the front door is open, and a delicious smell is wafting from the inside.

The next store is more understated, painted with deep tones that bespeak elegance. There's a mystery about the decor inside because the windows display fine art and you can hear classical music from behind the thick door, which has a shining golden knob practically calling to you to open it and enter.

Then there's the third restaurant. Or is it a restaurant? There are no windows. It looks like it hasn't been painted in a while. The sidewalk hasn't been swept, there's no welcome mat, and the light over the door is broken. You might go in just to satisfy your curiosity, but given that there are two other restaurants immediately available that obviously want your patronage, why would you bother with the one that apparently cares nothing about inviting you to dine? Marketing matters!

No matter where you are lacking, no matter what your challenges, repeat after me: *there's help for that!* There's no shame in not knowing what to do. There is help for all of the areas in which you feel insecure or uneducated, help that will make others want to find out what your merits are and see you are a person worth hiring, training, retaining, and promoting.

There's help at every price point. The Internet is a great place to start, where you can Google or YouTube endless information. Need help with how to dress? Hire an image consultant. If you can't afford the \$800 or so for a private consultation, most image consultants offer something along the lines of a "style class" where, for approximately \$100 per person, you can spend a day discovering where to start bettering your professional appearance. Go to www.aici.org to find a consultant.

Quotable

I didn't see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything. It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life.

Steve Jobs

Contact Sue today to learn how she can meet your business needs

Sue Thompson

877.231.6993

Sue@SetFreeLifeSeminars.com

www.setfreeliveseminars.com



Need help with how to interact with others without clamming up, how to speak well and present comfortably? Go to your local library and pick up Dale Carnegie's timeless classic, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, OR go to www.dalecarnegie.com and see about taking a course!

Need to learn about or refresh yourself on proper table manners? Low price point: *Etiquette for Dummies* or *Miss Manner's Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Behavior*. Higher price point with hands-on training: any number of folks (including the author of this newsletter) provide etiquette training in courses or one-on-one.

Your **very best choice** to refine all of those important storefront elements that will have people wanting to enter in and find out what you've got to offer: click on the link below for "Image is Everything Except When It's Not." The point is this: do not do nothing. Decide to do something because THERE IS HELP for whatever you need.

There's just one more month before this year is gone and a new one begins. Decide that in the coming year, you will address the crucial factors that show those you wish to impress that you are impressive!

Don't say you can't or that it isn't necessary. Teddy Bear knows what she's talking about. Take it from an elegant, refined Greyhound who was once an undisciplined pup: any dog can learn new tricks if she has a good trainer. 🐕

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Image is Everything Except When it's Not

You've got the education and background, and you continue to develop your skills. But unless you know how to package these assets, few will be interested in looking beyond what they can see to find out what's inside!

Employers are looking for—and hold onto—quality and excellence.

Do they know you possess it? How?

Click to learn more about this exciting workshop.



Click Etiquette Dog to visit my blog

