

One Step, One Journey, Sunday, January 5, 2014

A Daily Gratitude List by Barb Seidl

Good morning, Friends. I've been asked to say a few words about a spiritual practice. I have a practice of keeping a gratitude list – and I'd like to share a recent story about that practice.

This Christmas, my entire family gathered in Florida where my parents live. My parents live in a tiny place so they rented a house for the week and, being the single aunty, I ended up in “the kids' room—a row of twin beds, my bed being next to the bed of my just barely 13 year-old nephew Keegan. Each night, as we lay in bed, Keegan, desperate to delay his bed time, would start asking me questions. “Hey Aunt Barb—what’s your favorite color?” “Hey Aunt Barb, what’s your second favorite color?” The questions were actually my favorite part of the whole week.

Before I go to bed, I have a spiritual practice of writing a gratitude list—simple bullet points of what I'm grateful for that day. I've done it for years. So I was writing my gratitude list when Keegan said,

“Hey Aunt Barb, what're you doin?”

“I'm writing my gratitude list.” I said.

“What's gratitude?” he asked.

Now if that wasn't a tactic to stay up another hour, I don't know what is. This kid knew his audience. But I went with it.

“Gratitude is when you're thankful for something.”

“Oh, like Thanksgiving?” he said.

“Yes, but every day. Actually, every moment if you can. What are you thankful for today?”

Keegan said he was thankful he was able to play a lot of soccer that day, and that the flight his older brother Kris had been on had arrived safely. He asked what I was grateful for—and I handed him my list where he read out loud that I was grateful I was sharing a room with Keegan because we got to talk at night.

“Why do you write it down?” he asked.

I said that it helps me remember things that happen and also, over the years, it has shown me what's important to me. The same things come up over and over again.

“What's important to you, Aunt Barb?” he asked.

I told him there are four things that come up over and over:

#1 Him. Whenever I talk to Keegan or his brother Kris on the phone or spend time with them, it's there on my gratitude list.

#2 My relationship with my parents

#3 My health and

#4...in fact, the one that comes up most often – over and over again for years as I count my blessings before I fall asleep...I am so grateful for flannel sheets.

“Hey, Aunt Barb?”

“Yay, Keeg?”

“What's your favorite color of flannel sheets?”

“Goodnight, Keegan.”