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Gratitude: An Act of Truth Telling

*Excerpted from **Ambition Addiction: Giving Thanks on the Road to Recovery** by Benjamin Shalva*

by [Benjamin Shalva](#)



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Spirituality & Health

to let the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth— shine on a special significance for the compulsively ambitious. We ambition addicts have devoted our lives to steadfastly rejecting reality and earnestly embracing fantasy. We've constructed fantastical dreams in opposition to truth. Our all-or-nothing futures depict us ageless,

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When we practice gratitude, we put down our weapons. We enact a ceasefire. We shake hands with death, and by doing so, detect life's miraculous pulse. From this honest encounter with the truth of life and death, we speak truthful words. Not sentiment. Not fantasy. Truth. Perhaps for the first time in quite a while, we ambition addicts taste truth as it rolls off our tongues. We feel truth as it passes over our lips. We hear the timbre of our voices unencumbered by agenda, pretension, and fear. Over time, we, masters of the tall tale, we, authors of the conquest narrative, grow practiced in the art of honesty.

On the road to recovery, we make a commitment to give thanks, at the very least, once a day—upon waking each morning. No matter our mood, regardless of whatever manic energy or debilitating exhaustion accompanies our rise, we make gratitude our inaugural proclamation, our leadoff pitch. Having done so, we are less inclined to take our life for granted. Gratitude at dawn primes us to greet our waking hours as a gift.

We begin our practice of gratitude, every morning, by giving thanks for life in general, not life wedded to any specific circumstance or detail, just simple, unadulterated life. Eventually, though, we may choose to expand the scope of our morning missives, articulating thanks for the specific as well as the generic. After whispering “You are amazing, Universe—you gave me the gift of my life, and I will always be thankful,” we might decide, one day, to tack on a second phrase, such as “You are amazing, Universe—you gave me the gift of *my family*, and I will always be thankful.”

If so moved, we may even turn our one-liner of a gratitude practice into an evolving soliloquy of thanks. What began as “You are amazing, Universe—you gave me the gift of my life, and I will always be thankful” might one day morph into:

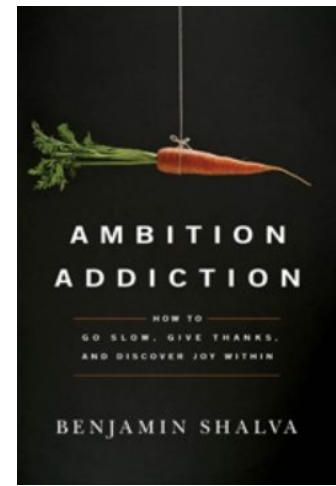
You are amazing, Universe—you gave me the gift of my life, and I will always be thankful. You are amazing, Universe—you gave me the gifts of my husband, Theo, and my three beautiful children, Olivia, Clementine, and Theo Jr., and I will always be thankful. You are amazing, Universe—you gave me the gifts of my home, the food in our fridge, the money in our bank, a job that doesn't suck as much as my last job, a paycheck that pays most of the bills most of the time, the writings of Toni Morrison, the movies of Judd Apatow, the incredible stick work of hockey superstar Alexander Ovechkin, and that bakery over on Seventh Street that makes those insanely delicious blueberry muffins that I know I shouldn't eat but I just don't care because if you didn't want me to eat them, dear Universe, you shouldn't have made them so damn irresistible, and I will always be thankful.

Nothing need remain out of bounds. We can *Give Thanks* for life's glorious treasures and for life's little perks. We can allow our practice of gratitude to ebb and flow, to lengthen and contract, to shift from the undeniably profound to the ostensibly trivial to the undeniably profound once more. Each morning, we simply turn the ignition with our opening declaration of thanks, and then we see where the gratitude leads.

Excerpted from [Ambition Addiction: How to Go Slow, Give Thanks, and Discover Joy Within](#) by Benjamin Shalva © 2016. Reprinted by arrangement with Grand Harbor Press

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this miraculous life into an
We've cursed our own and
we sense the enemy's
ly, there is no room for
lly, and spiritually, no
dangling carrot remains at a



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