

# Gratefully Accepting the NOs

Transitions: The gifts of change

By Gail Kauranen Jones

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*“In our daily lives, we must see that it is not happiness that makes us grateful, but the gratefulness that makes us happy.” --Albert Clarke*

Many coaches like myself--and other inspirational leaders and teachers--often guide others to practice gratitude as a way to empower themselves to stay grounded and happy.

In fact, developing a gratitude list has become a daily activity for many in these challenging economic times. My list in recent months has included several people in our local community who have given their time or service to support me. One was a local fence contractor who rushed over within 24 hours to fix a broken gate after my dog escaped (and was picked up by our animal control officer). Another was a builder who repaired a stuck garage door, free-of-charge. Then there was a local hardware store employee who did some heavy lifting for me, going way beyond the call of duty. There have been others as well who came forth quietly and thoughtfully with their kind gestures, allowing me to feel great dignity in accepting support.

Initiating random acts of kindness has always been part of who I am and what I give. I am grateful (and somewhat humbled) that I could also accept being on the receiving end, as I have this time. For it is in giving AND receiving that we truly know love and care. Receiving a kindness is a gift we provide to the giver.

Appreciating all the kindness of late, I also am reminded how grateful I am for the things I wanted to have happen but didn't.

Two years ago, I independently sold my house and purchased another one in walking distance to downtown Newburyport. My intent then was to embrace a new lifestyle where I'd feel more connected to an entrepreneurial community with a diversity of other single parents like me.

The deal unexpectedly fell through, just as the housing market began to take a nosedive. Looking back, I see now that the community I was looking for outside of town is now very much part of my life here. ABT Yoga and A Body Transformed massage studio in the Whimsey House on Main Street offer the spiritual connection I was longing for; Intuitionet provides a network of women entrepreneurs and others exploring mid-life transition options; the Kick Up Your Shoes monthly concert series hosts talented musicians in an intimate Topsfield setting; and our local paper values sharing with the community my transitions expertise through this column.

Now that I have a daughter who drives, I am even more grateful I didn't relocate my family. The home we were to buy had no assigned parking, the complications of which I couldn't even fathom then. Imagining now a teenager circling around late at night in search of a place to park a car is a terrifying prospect. Waiting up for her arrival home from work to my Topsfield driveway is enough of a concern.

I'm also glad a national career opportunity for which I was negotiating didn't materialize. While the exposure would have increased my visibility as a coach, it would have taken me away from home--not just physically, but mentally as well--at a time when I am savoring my final days with my daughter before she leaves for college. Besides, as any parent of a high school junior knows, our teenagers need us now more than ever as they bounce around a multitude of career options and other pending changes.

I see many other "Nos" in my life as gifts as well. Some helped strengthen my character, while others helped me become more discerning about who or what I allow into my life. I've certainly acquired a level of patience I didn't have before, which has given me the wisdom to know when to say yes to a personal or professional opportunity.

Ready for a new challenge, I gratefully accept the next steps forward...after that planned summer trip to Bar Harbor, please.

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