

In all things give thanks

When we go through difficult times, rather than fighting it or getting angry, another option is to adopt an attitude of gratitude: to be thankful for what is happening and seek out the opportunity to grow. Carl Jung said, “What you resist persists.” Things happen for a reason. They happen to give us an opportunity to grow, to become more genuine and to live in greater alignment with our values and purpose. What we do with these opportunities is up to us. We can fight, resist and get angry. That gives energy to the struggle. Raising young children, you learn what to do when they have a temper tantrum: ignore it! If you pay attention, try to negotiate or get angry yourself, the tantrum will only escalate.

This true story illustrates my point: One day, a woman who had always wanted to have children, found out she had a brain tumor which caused infertility and gave her terrible headaches. Rather than risk having surgery, she decided to treat it alternatively. Based on the belief that the tumor must have some purpose for being in her life, she began to explore the question: Why did I create a tumor that caused infertility when I’ve always wanted children? As she searched her soul and looked more closely at her beliefs, she began to realize that based on her childhood experiences, the last thing she actually wanted was to have a child.

After fighting the tumor for a couple of years, she found herself one day getting mad at the tumor, wishing it would go away. She realized that she was indeed very angry about having the tumor and that by being angry, she was giving a lot of (negative) energy to the tumor. She was resisting and the tumor was persisting. She also realized that in the two years she’d had the tumor, it had been the catalyst for tremendous personal growth and that, in fact, the tumor was making her a better person. In that moment, she started to talk to her tumor, thanking it for all it had done to help her. She gave it permission to stay for the rest of her days. Six months later, medical tests showed the tumor was completely gone.

A few years ago, as I was going through my divorce, I had many opportunities to practice facing difficult times with

an attitude of gratitude. Going into it, I envisioned an amicable, smooth divorce so we could keep our focus on parenting our children. That’s not what happened. It was long, there was a lot of litigation and more money went to attorneys than I’d ever dreamed possible. Many things happened that scared me and made me mad. Yet I believed that getting divorced was the right thing to do—for everyone. So as each thing happened that scared me or cost more attorney’s fees, I learned to say to myself: “I’m not sure how, but somehow this is benefiting me and I am grateful. Somehow this will all work out.” And it did. Everything that happened made me stronger, wiser, better off financially (in spite of the attorney’s fees!) and more at peace that I had done all I could to be fair with my husband and protect the children. I couldn’t have orchestrated it better, if I had been in control. It was always my intention to get along well with my children’s father, working together to co-parent the kids and now, finally, we do!

The divorce taught me a beautiful lesson: I learned not to judge things that happen as “good” or “bad,” instead just to be thankful and have faith that things will work out. I have a little mantra that I say to myself whenever I find negative or fearful thoughts rattling around my head: “Unexpected good comes to me now from unexpected places and I am grateful.” Then I just wait for the “good” surprise. If you feel inspired, please give it a try and let me know how it goes.