

Podcast 452: The Power of Gratitude

Episode Transcript

Andrew Pudewa: We, I think, are all grateful for when we know the real impact that we're having in people's lives.

Julie Walker: Hello, and welcome to the Arts of Language Podcast with Andrew Pudewa, founder of the Institute for Excellence in Writing or as many like to say, "IEW." My name is Julie Walker, and I'm honored to serve Andrew and IEW as the chief marketing officer. Our goal is to equip teachers and teaching parents with methods and materials, which will aid them in training their students to become confident and competent communicators and thinkers.

Julie Walker: Happy Thanksgiving, Andrew Pudois.

Andrew Pudewa: It will be very, very soon.

Julie Walker: Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: Tomorrow, I guess.

Julie Walker: And so where are you the day before Thanksgiving?

Andrew Pudewa: I anticipate that I will be playing with my grandchildren. Or preparing some food. Or, I don't know, catching up on correspondence. Could be any number of things.

Julie Walker: I am in California.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, playing with grandchildren. Of course.

Julie Walker: Of course. I'm not really there now.

Andrew Pudewa: No, because we're in the studio. Looking at each other.

Julie Walker: Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: Projecting the future. This would be after the election has happened.

So we don't know who won the election, even though this is after that election happened, because we are actually before it. Anyway, I hope that all Americans will be grateful, whatever the outcome.

Julie Walker: Yes. Indeed. Indeed. And that is, of course, the topic of today's podcast is appropriately gratitude.

Andrew Pudewa: Of course, you pull this on me every year.

Julie Walker: I do. And I think it's so appropriate for us at IEW because Andrew, that is one of the core values that you exude. We have not actually placed that on the list of core values of our company, but you definitely exude gratitude. And so I always think it's a great opportunity for our listeners to hear from you why this is so important to you and how we can best convey gratitude to each other.

Andrew Pudewa: I have a podcast I listen to on health and nutrition. And I like the idea he has at the end of his interviews, whoever he's talking to, he always says, Now, I believe in vitamin G.

Julie Walker: Mm.

Andrew Pudewa: Gratitude does more for your health than so many other things, and it can make make up for a multitude of, I won't say sins, but a multitude of lacks. It strengthens the mind, the spirit, the soul. And the thing that I frequently contemplate is how easy it is in today's modern world where we have everything that we could possibly imagine, even the poor people in this country have way more than the richest people did a few hundred years ago. Just for example, hot showers. Right? Those only came into the existence of most people's lives less than a hundred years ago. Was this idea you could get up, turn on hot water, get in, and have a hot shower.

Now of course, if our water heater goes out, we feel a horrible sense of injustice and we can't have a hot shower and while miserable, I mean, cold shower might actually be better, but, but we just take everything so for granted. And I think that's truer for younger people, our sense of history as a society is less, and we don't contemplate the hardships.

That's why reading books about hard times, I think is so valuable for all of us, but for children in particular, to get a picture, an image, to go in their imagination to a time when it was really hard to do just basic things. And I always, I always counter people complain about their air travel experience or something like, Oh, I was delayed two hours and I lost my flight and then I didn't get to where I was going till midnight.

Yeah, okay.

Julie Walker: As someone who travels more often than the average human being, Andrew, you must have some incredible hardship stories.

Andrew Pudewa: What do I always say? What do I always say to myself? The worst possible travel inconvenience, it's still better than stagecoach,

Julie Walker: Right.

Andrew Pudewa: Right? So, it's all perspective,

Julie Walker: Sure, sure,

Andrew Pudewa: So, what are you grateful for these days?

Julie Walker: Well, speaking to what you were talking about and experiencing hardship. We did a podcast A few weeks ago on basically my experience as a homeschool mom, and some of the things that I did that thought I did well, and some things that I did that I didn't do so well.

And I didn't bring this up at the time, but it did make me think about this. One of the things that we tried to do for our children, especially when they were teenagers, was send them on mission trips and to what was called and still is called Wildwood Youth Camp. And these were hard times, the mission trips, our kids would come back being much more grateful for those hot showers, for their soft bed than when we first sent them in.

And Wildwood isn't your typical youth camp. There were long, arduous bike rides, service projects, and they didn't even have a swimming pool when my boys went there. And yet they came home with a much deeper spiritual experience than they would have if it would have been in just all fun and games play camp.

So I'm just really grateful that I had those opportunities in raising my boys. Of course, I'm at a very different season of life right now. And I think the thing that I am profoundly grateful for is, yes, we talk about grandchildren and playing with grandchildren and absolutely that, that tops the list of how wonderful it is to be a grandparent. I didn't expect to be this way, Andrew.

Andrew Pudewa: no,

Julie Walker: I didn't expect... All my friends are having grandkids and I wasn't going to be one of those. Gaga, Goo Goo Grandma as well. I totally am. I love.

Andrew Pudewa: and I totally am.

Julie Walker: Yes. And here we are.

Andrew Pudewa: That's why I always say, young people, have as many children as you can, then you have the best chance of having as many grandchildren as you can.

Andrew Pudewa: And if you're super lucky, you'll have some that live near you.

Julie Walker: But I would say, in addition to that, and this kind of brings it back to our core values here at IEW. I am grateful to have the privilege of working here at IEW with you. It's very true. Even the flexibility. I'm leaving to go visit my grandchildren and you know what you say.

Great. Have a good time. Give them a hug for me.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. And of course, in my mind, I'm grateful for the fact that I got like a week off from meetings and podcast recordings and all the things that. But I am grateful for you. And we, I think, are all grateful for when we know the real impact that we're having in people's lives.

And I have had a little break in my travel schedule. And so I have been trying to catch up on kid correspondence. And one of the problems is I do get letters from students out there who've watched our videos or done our program. I get them much faster than I answer them. And so I have this big pile, but it's okay. I think people understand, but I wanted to share this one just 'cause it's so cute, you don't mind.

Julie Walker: Oh, of course, please do.

Andrew Pudewa: It came in June, and I answered it last week, so that tells you about how backlogged I am.

Dear Mr. Pudewa, IEW is amazing. I have been using IEW Structure and Style for Students for a few years, and I enjoy it very much. I'm writing this letter as an assignment for Level 1B, Week 19.

Julie Walker: Of course you are. Yeah, absolutely.

Andrew Pudewa: I chose to write to you because I thought it would be interesting to send a letter to the person who taught me to write eloquently. Immediately after this paragraph, I will tell you a few things that you may wish to learn about me. As I consider my splendid experience with IEW, I'll state my favorite parts. Before the closing of this letter, I shall share the things I'd like to learn about you. So, you can tell, this is gonna be the typical five paragraph, highly organized, but smooth.

Alright, I would like to begin by informing you a little bit about myself. As you may have seen from the return address, I live in Yankton, which is in southern South Dakota, right along the Missouri River. I have eight incredible siblings, aged zero to fourteen. It is wonderful to have so many people around, and I am rarely bored.

Julie Walker: And his mother will have so many grandchildren. So much fun.

Andrew Pudewa: As for my age, I am 12. Because I am homeschooled, I watch the Structure and Style for Students videos with my sister. Currently, I am on level 1B, and I am in 7th grade. My favorite things to do include reading, playing soccer, doing school, and playing piano. That is a short description of me.

For me, IEW has been an incredibly enjoyable and absolutely educational way to learn writing. Your humorous jokes with which you commence each lesson are a fun break from the rest of my difficult schoolwork. The key word outline is an invaluable asset that enables me to plan my writing so that I'm not just jotting down random words on a page. Amazingly, even when my writing seems as though it couldn't be worse, adding dress ups and other style techniques spice up my writing and give it more personality.

Because I love being creative, I prefer writing fictional stories. But nonfiction isn't far behind. My favorite assignment was when we chose our own topics. My choice was national parks. For this whole year, I've had a wonderful time with IEW, and I've learned a lot.

I would like to hear a few things about you because I know that you have grandkids. I would like to know how they are. As I stated earlier, I am in Level 1B, so would you please send if you choose to write back, a two paragraph composition about hot sauces. In every lesson you include at least one joke, which I enjoy, but I'm sure you have a few more up your sleeve. Will you tell one or two to me? I have a joke about a rare gift, but you probably won't get it. Finally, I would enjoy hearing what you like to do and what your favorite hobbies are. These are the most pertinent things I wish to learn about the extraordinary Andrew Pudewa.

I have told you some general information about myself, a few facts about my school, and my most loved activities. When I informed you about my experience with IEW, which has been wonderful, I shared my favorite techniques and assignments. In my final body paragraph, I inquired the things I wish to know about you. Potentially, you will send a return letter and reply to my inquiries. Most significantly, I had a wonderful experience with Structure and Style for Students. Writing is one of my favorite subjects, but without IEW, it might not be. I learn better when it is fun. I try harder at subjects I like rather than ones I don't. Because of your incredible teaching methods and fun atmosphere of your video classes, I love school even more now. Thank you very much.

Sincerely, Quinton.

Julie Walker: Oh, what an amazing letter!

Andrew Pudewa: the vocabulary!

Julie Walker: know, right?

Andrew Pudewa: He's probably a high aptitude kid to begin with, but, when, when I read that, I'm just flooded with gratitude that me and my little corner of the world can somehow, through the magic of video, touch the heart and mind of of kids all over the place.

And I have a huge stack of these of all different ages. I responded to one recently and she said, the best thing about IEW is I don't cry anymore when I do English.

Julie Walker: Oh dear. No more tears.

Andrew Pudewa: Anyway, I like to read these, every now and then. The other thing you get from this child is he's grateful. he's grateful for his, how many siblings?

Julie Walker: Is he one of eight or...

Andrew Pudewa: "I have eight incredible siblings," so he's one of nine, and "it's wonderful to have so many people around, I'm rarely bored."

I think that's, that's interesting because you, I don't know that I've ever met a person who said, I wish I had fewer siblings. Right? I think once you've grown up and you've knocked each other's edges off and polished up a bit, you're super grateful for the family. So I think Thanksgiving also gives us a time to reflect on family.

Julie Walker: And often, yeah. And oftentimes with our family. Yeah. Yeah.

Andrew Pudewa: But you can't force kids to feel grateful. However, I heard an interesting talk at a conference I was at recently, and it, it touched on this idea of by saying something, you help it become true, right? You may not feel or believe the thing you're saying, but as you say it, then it does become more true for you.

And why it's so very important to teach children to say thank you. And to say, I am sorry. And to say I appreciate things, it may not stem from their feeling, but the idea was that the reality of the feeling can become more present with the habit of expressing it. Kind of a fake it till you make it idea, which is completely valid, completely valid.

And I was glad because it fit in nicely with the talk that I was doing that sometimes you don't feel obedient, but you pretend to be obedient. And guess what? You can grow in your ability to be obedient, et cetera.

Julie Walker: You've written an article that we can include a link in the show notes to it called, "You Don't Have to Like It."

Andrew Pudewa: Yes, you don't.

Julie Walker: And the joke around here is Andrew Pudewa does not like to write. It is true. We're still waiting for a Magalog article.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, you will have got it by the time people hear this.

Julie Walker: or we will have replaced it with something different.

Andrew Pudewa: No, no, no, it's going to be good.

Julie Walker: It's going to be good.

But I do, I do really appreciate this letter. And what's his name? Quinton? Quinton. He mentions that he likes to write because he believes he can do it, which is total confirmation of your teaching boys and motivation

Andrew Pudewa: We should link to that Principles of Motivation because of all the things that I share with people, that, and it's kind of an iteration of the easy plus one. But in a more direct motivation application way, it's probably the one thing where I see the light bulb go off and people say, Oh, the reason my child doesn't like this is because he's overwhelmed.

So how do I backtrack and get unoverwhelmed? And so, I'm grateful that I've been able to articulate that with relative clarity to so many people for so many years.

Julie Walker: So important. And even just that idea of you are motivated if you believe that you're appreciated. And I think that's part of what you do around here is you walk around and

yes, you have your joke of the day generally, but oftentimes it's just you're that, that bright encouragement that people just love to hear from you.

Andrew Pudewa: I was recently cooking dinner for the whole family for one of my daughter's birthdays, and her daughter, nine year old granddaughter is really getting quite handy and quite useful in the kitchen. So, I put her in charge of chopping all the vegetables and stirring everything. And she really, she cut the time in half. As we were eating, she kept saying, "When you cook the food, it tastes so much better."

Julie Walker: Oh, that's nice. Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: "Cause your heart goes into it. And it was very interesting because I was reading to these same children the book, *Because of Winn Dixie*, which is a magnificent little book. And in the book, one of the great, great grandfathers of one of the characters had a huge tragedy, lost his whole family in the civil war, came back and started a candy company. And he had these lozenges that were just particularly unique. And what was the secret ingredient? It was sadness. And so, he was able to take a candy and mix sweetness with sadness. And so, the granddaughter, she made this connection and said, "That's like when you cook something and it tastes better because you are part of it." Something like that, she said. And then we talked a little bit about why, when you're feeling sad, when you see or hear or experience something a little sad, it sometimes helps you. I didn't use the word cathartic, but, that feeling.

Julie Walker: Yep. Exactly. Well, I want to share one story, if that's okay, as we're wrapping up. It's something I shared with my grandchildren, of course, while they were recently visiting. I had them for five days.

Andrew Pudewa: I know.

Julie Walker: Just me and my husband and our two grandkids. And we, we went to the Gathering Place four times.

Andrew Pudewa: The park, it's so beautiful. You guys out there, you all have to visit Tulsa at least once, just to come to the Gathering Place once.

Julie Walker: It's totally free. And every time you go, why would we go four times? Because the park is so big. We experienced a different part of the park every time.

Andrew Pudewa: The kids could go on those slides.

Julie Walker: Yes, it's true.

Andrew Pudewa: Hours a day, many days in a row.

Julie Walker: Or dig in the sand. And there's multiple places for that, which is, of course, what we did. I did share with them the importance of gratitude. And I shared a little story with them. I said, once upon a time, because all good stories start with once upon a time, I

was taking your dad's friend home, fellow homeschool kid. We're doing some activity together and it was my turn to be the carpool. And he was the only one when I'm dropping off kids, he was the only one that said, thank you, Mrs. Walker. And I was always so impressed with him because he would always express gratitude. And I said, can you guess who that friend is? And they both said together, Uncle John! So Daniel is still friends with his friend John, and he is very much their uncle even though he's not related by blood because he is invested in them because he just comes across as being grateful. And I just think that that is something that his mom taught him that.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, affection and gratitude are so closely related. A grateful person is likely to be a more affectionate, the ease of expression of affection. It reminds me of the story where Jesus healed the lepers. And only one of them came back, essentially, to say thank you. And Jesus said, where are the other, was it, nine? Ten were healed, where are the other nine? And I think that's such a good little story because we want to be the one that remembers to express gratitude.

Julie Walker: And it's never too late to say thank you.

Andrew Pudewa: Never too late.

Julie Walker: Well, thank you, Andrew.

Andrew Pudewa: Thank you, Julie.

Julie Walker: Thanks so much for joining us. If you enjoyed this episode and want to hear more, please subscribe to our podcast in iTunes, Stitcher, or Spotify. Or just visit us each week at IEW.com/podcast. Here you can also find show notes and relevant links from today's broadcast. One last thing: would you mind going to iTunes to rate and review our podcast? This really helps other smart, caring listeners like you find us. Thanks so much.