Podcast 557: The Power of Gratitude

Episode Transcript

Andrew Pudewa: I want to teach you the secret of having a happy life, and that is to be grateful for whatever you get. Just think, if you could be as grateful for a broken leg as for a million dollars, wouldn't you be perfectly happy?

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

Andrew Pudewa: Yes, and it's sweater weather

Julie Walker: It is. It is. Nice and cozy, and we put up some Christmas decorations.

Andrew Pudewa: Yes. It seems a little premature to me, of course, because you know my attitude about Christmas. Advent

Julie Walker: True

Andrew Pudewa: is a penitential fasting season.

Julie Walker: It is true.

Andrew Pudewa: But we can build up. We can build up.

Julie Walker: Yeah. We typically, at our family, we start putting out our Christmas decorations right after Thanksgiving.

Andrew Pudewa: Yes, and we used to. But now we wait until two days or one day before Christmas, and the trees are so cheap.

Julie Walker: Okay. True story that I'm not sure is true. My dad used to tell me that they would wait until Christmas Eve to put up their Christmas tree, and he's got. His mother came over from Sweden.

Andrew Pudewa:Yeah, I think that's the European way.

Julie Walker: The European way

Andrew Pudewa: The old European tradition.

Julie Walker: But he told us that the reason he did that was because the trees were cheap. They just got Charlie Brown trees brought into the house and had to take 'em out.

Andrew Pudewa: We got an awesome one at a very cheap price. But, for us, it's that's just the way. But I think we're all irritated by, as soon as September hits, you've gotta see Halloween skeletons in the yards. And then before the skeletons are gone, you've gotta think about Black Friday.

Julie Walker: Black Friday, yes.

Andrew Pudewa: Thanksgiving, I don't know, it kinda gets squeezed out.

Julie Walker: Yeah, who knows when Black Friday is now because people are already talking about Black Friday.

Andrew Pudewa: and Cyber Monday.

Julie Walker: Which we do a little bit of Cyber Monday. We have our clearance sale, which if we have things that get dented or somehow damaged, mostly from our conventions that we do, we put those on clearance, and then at our clearance sale we sell them for half price.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. Very good deals.

Julie Walker: Yeah, it is a pretty good deal.

Andrew Pudewa: And then it clears out inventory by the end of the year. So it works out nicely, but we're not the Cyber Monday, let's get as much sales as we can squeezed into one week or whatever.

Julie Walker: No. Exactly. Exactly. And just a little nod to our no discounting policy that you shared with me when I first started working with you all those years ago, and I actually wrote a little article about it that we'll put a link in the show notes. The article's called Where's My Coupon Code?

Because there is a place on our website when they're checking out to put in a promo code because occasionally we have free shipping. That kind of idea. But we, as a rule, don't, we don't discount our material.

Andrew Pudewa: Nor do our resellers.

Julie Walker: And our resellers. We enforce that. Yeah. So we just want it to be fair, and we don't want you to be sad that you missed the sale. Don't worry. You didn't miss the sale because we don't have 'em, unless it's a clearance sale, which is pretty specified.

Andrew Pudewa: But this is the Thanksgiving season.

Julie Walker: Yes. And so of course, when we're talking about Thanksgiving, our theme every year for many years, Andrew, has been the attitude of gratitude and how important that is honestly to our corporate culture. And I thought I would just show a little tool that we have, the staff received this year. This is our planner. So this is a planner that our team received. I have to find the-

Andrew Pudewa: And it goes by the school year?

Julie Walker: It goes by the sc- it's an academic year. But then because I like to plan ahead, it goes for months and years past that.

Andrew Pudewa: Don't show that. People are gonna beg to buy it or something. We're not-

Julie Walker: Well, maybe this is a little foreshadowing. But every, after every month is a page to list things that you're grateful for.

Andrew Pudewa: Vitamin G.

Julie Walker: Vitamin G?

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, there's one health podcaster out there. He says vitamin G is the most- powerful thing you can do for your physical and mental health

Julie Walker: Gratitude. I love that.

Andrew Pudewa: Actually, there's a whole lot of research to show that if you spend a little bit of time each day, just mentally or in writing listing the things you're grateful for, it reduces all causes of mortality.

Julie Walker: Oh, so next year we have to have a gratitude page after every day? I mean- We'll start small …

Andrew Pudewa: I'm just saying. That's his claim. I'm not a health researcher.

Julie Walker: Vitamin G ...

Andrew Pudewa: But I like it, vitamin G.

Julie Walker: Yeah, I like that too. So my family, the fact that my husband's retired, I'm grateful for our country. I'm grateful for my job. I love our mission here at IEW and I'm grateful for that. I love taking vacations, and I'm grateful that I've been able to take some vacations this year. I'm grateful for my grandchildren. I have boys. I'm grateful for my boys having grown up to be men. They all survived, and I'm also grateful that they found some incredible wives. We are now a two-car family, and I'm grateful for that. We've been a one-car family for over 15 years. Now with my husband retired, we kinda needed two cars.

Andrew Pudewa: He needs to go somewhere else while you're going somewhere else.

Julie Walker: While I'm going somewhere else, which is fun,

Andrew Pudewa: I don't think we've ever not been a two-car family.

Julie Walker: Anyway, lots of things to be grateful for. So I, we can't really demonstrate this to its fullest extent, but I would like for you, Andrew, to narrate your lesson on gratitude that you teach to children.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. It's faded out because we don't do that particular thing anymore.

Julie Walker: I know that you're teaching your grandchildren and their friends with their classes. But, there's Tell me

Andrew Pudewa: There are a few things that I used to say, and they got recorded, and they existed for a decade or more. One of them, of course, it's not in this gratitude lesson, but when I teach the kids to double space and how to put things in above not below, above, and cross out or use the little upside down V caret widget thingy. I say, “If you don't, if you don't double space,” because you're writing in pen, no erasing allowed on the rough draft, “you'll be in deep yogurt.”

And a lot of people ask me, “Why do you say deep yogurt?” Like they haven't heard it before. Actually, I don't know that I've ever heard anyone else except my father. He used to say that. He'd say, “You better not do that again, or you'll be in deep yogurt.” So it was a childhood thing. And when things you learn when you're young, you just figure everybody knows that. And so I said it to the kids, and they laugh because they'd never heard it before.

Julie Walker: But I'm sure they can imagine themselves swimming through deep yogurt, and they're not doing very well because.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, or just flat out sinking. Drowning. So anyway, that's where that came from. So I was traveling around doing these Student Writing Intensive weeks. And I would go to a city and teach the kids four days. And then teach the parents two days. So that'd be six days in one city, and I'd do that, half a dozen times a year. It was pretty brutal travel.

Julie Walker: And that's how we met. That's what we hosted when I was working for Biola University, recruiting homeschoolers to Biola. Hey, let's get this guy to come down and-teach them about deep yogurt.

Andrew Pudewa: So on day three I would give them some mini books, which were used with kind of a unit four-six thing. And I wanted them to learn to notice the topic-clincher key words in the mini books as examples of how to do the topic clincher rule. And so I had highlighters, and you buy these bag or boxes of highlighters, and you get different colors. And I don't know, maybe once or twice, I lost five minutes or more because the kids were just whining, “I don't like pink. I want yellow. I don't want this color. I want that color. Can I trade?” And I was just, “Okay, what can we do with this?” So the next time I did it, I said, “Now, I want to teach you the secret of having a happy life. And that is to be grateful for whatever you get. Just think, if you could be as grateful for a broken leg as for a million dollars, wouldn't you be perfectly happy?”

Julie Walker: Unquestionable logic there.

Andrew Pudewa: Yes. If you could.

Julie Walker: If you could.

Andrew Pudewa: I don't know if I could. But, if you could. “So we're gonna practice this, and I'm gonna throw you a highlighter. And whether or not you like the color, whether or not it hits you in the nose, whatever happens, you say, ‘Thank you’ and don't try to trade or whine or complain or argue about you need a different color.” And so then I would just semi-randomly reach in the bag and throw a highlighter to everyone in the room. And most of the time they'd catch it. If they didn't, it was usually my bad throw, but occasionally it would hit them in the nose, and everyone would say, “Thank you.” Thank you. And sometimes I would get this feeling like, "Okay, there's a boy over there. What he really needs is a pink one."

Julie Walker: Yeah, he does.

Andrew Pudewa: And I would throw him the pink one. But mostly it was pretty random. So I don't know. I did that for years, and it was just one of those things. You saw me do it probably.

Julie Walker: Of course I did. Yeah. Yes. And I love that story so much that I actually had you share that story when our team got together for a retreat, and we were passing out some cups that Heidi St. John had given to us. And I wanted to be sure that people were grateful for whatever color they got and rather than insisting on they got the pink or the purple.

I've used that story lots of times. Do you know, when my family gets together, I have an ex- rather large extended family. It's pretty chaotic when we get together. We play this game called Jokers. It requires pegs and a board and cards, and it's a fun little game. But my brother absolutely 100% of the time wants the pink pegs. In fact, my niece made him some special pink pegs with his face on it so that no one would accidentally use Pete's pink peg. My dad used the clear ones because he liked to be a little secretive on the board so that you could go around the board.

Andrew Pudewa: I don't think I've ever seen this game.

Julie Walker: Oh, it's a really fun game. I should teach it to you. But to be grateful.

Andrew Pudewa: I'll be happy with whatever peg's color. I'm not particular.

Julie Walker: Yes, you, yes, you will. Yes, you will. So as we go into this season now of holidays and being busy with parties and recitals and lavish or not so lavish gift giving, that sometimes I think it's good for us to pause and to reflect and to be grateful for what we've been given here on this side of eternity, and we're really grateful. I just want to say this. We are really grateful for you for listening to this podcast today, for being a part of our IEW family. It has been a joy to serve you, Andrew, and serve all these people who have found great success in teaching their children how to write and think.

Andrew Pudewa: It's been a good run.

Julie Walker: Been a good run. Thank you, Andrew.

Andrew Pudewa: Thank you.

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