ANCHORING IN GRATITUDE – Submitted by Dr. Dale Johnson

We all go through turbulent times of "people we love passing peacefully"; of serious illness or injury; of relational conflicts with people we love; of occupational conflicts or loss of job; of deteriorating economic circumstances; and you can add to the list. **The main question is how do we adapt, adjust, and live a happy, fulfilling lifestyle.**

Mary Pipher's book entitled *"Women Rowing North, Navigating Life's Currents and Flourishing as We Age"* is primarily directed to women age 65 and older. (1) However, many of the concepts can be generalized to other ages and to men. Mary Pipher is a psychologist and has written several *New York Times* best sellers. **She describes and discusses how anchoring in gratitude relates to resiliency.**

Gratitude is a life skill that can be improved with practice. Even during the toughest trials, we can learn to find things to enjoy and appreciate. With the Coronavirus Pandemic, severe weather conditions affecting many, economic loss or adjustment, and national/international conflicts we are going through some tough trials. We can always create a moment in which we are flooded by beauty and that **the more desperate the times, the more important it is that we seek that kind of moment.**

Ironically, tragedy often catapults people toward gratitude whereas constant good fortune can actually make it hard to feel grateful. Privileged people may habituate to a comfortable easy life. A common reaction to an interviewed passenger whose flight was delayed for five hours and commented, "that this is the worst day of my life" was "lady get a life!" So many have actually been through many real tragedies.

Dr. Robert Emmons at the University of California, Davis, worked with transplant patients. In his study, two groups were asked to record their feelings about life. One group was instructed to add a daily list of five things or people they were grateful for**. After twenty-one days, the gratitude list group had improved their scores on measures of positive adjustment and well-being.** Both of these measures had declined for people who had not been asked to keep track of what they were grateful for.

My list of ten "grateful" items today include the following: thankful for an anniversary of 54 years of a good married life; family and friends that have a sense of moral justice; of moaning and groaning after hard physical labor because still being able to work is good; and a smashed banana and peanut butter on toast for breakfast.

What is your list of ten "grateful" items?

(1) Mary Pipher, *Women Rowing North, Navigating Life's Currents and Flourishing as We Age.* New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019) pp. 160 - 170.