

Educationally Speaking
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Top ten plus one thing to be thankful for

Now that the holiday season is upon us I should probably sit around thinking about all the things I'm thankful for. I guess.

My first thing to be thankful for is people who can take a situation and make it so short and succinct that everything just makes sense. For example, my friend Mitch and I went to an Applebee's in Carmel recently because the restaurant we really wanted to go to had a two hour wait. After eating we decided to drive around the corner to the movie theater and watch the new James Bond movie. The movie had started five minutes earlier and I was hurrying to get a parking spot before we missed much more of the movie. However, no parking spots were to be found when Mitch said, "Oh no! We have no place to park our convenience mobile!" Suddenly everything about American culture made sense: Driving and parking for movies, popcorn, candy and soda.

My second thing to be thankful for is that brief period of time in the shower after all the cleaning is done. That time I can sway back and forth in the warm water before realizing the world is calling and I have to get out.

Thirdly is my cat, Payton. Payton is a very independent cat that rarely lets people touch her. I love it when she invites me to pet her after she's laid on her back with her paws spread apart.

Fourth most is cheesecake. Not just any cheesecake, but New York Style cheesecake drizzled in strawberries. The best cheesecake I've ever had was at a restaurant called The Aristocrat in Indianapolis. I've yet to find a better slab of thick cheesecake.

Fifth, like cheesecake, I love iced tea. I love it when I can get iced tea that is sweetened to perfection. It has just the right amount of sugar or sweetener that when I sip it I think, "Sweet baby Jesus! Where did this come from!?" Add to that ice cubes that don't melt the second you put them in the tea, it's pure bliss.

Sixth, vanilla candles. My apartment is covered in them. As of right now I have at least six candles on my coffee table, four in my office, five in my bedroom and one in the kitchen. Plus, they all radiate enough heat that I can turn my thermostat down and not pay as much on my light bill.

Seventh, I love a clean desk. Especially when I can sit down in one morning, pay bills, write checks, finish papers, organize everything into folders for school and home and get everything tucked away into a drawer or shelf by noon. I know it'll only last until I check the mail or print something else, but it's a good feeling to see a wood surface again.

Eighth item to be thankful for: a morning or evening commute when I enter an Interstate just after the traffic backs up one exit behind me. I have a smooth ride all the way home or to work and I get to listen to the traffic reports indicate I'm leaving all the congestion behind.

Ninth, I love it when I can accurately predict how long it will take to prepare a baked potato. Whether I bake it or microwave it, getting the exact amount of time it takes to prepare a potato without having to set it in longer or adjust the oven temperature and still have a soft, flakey potato is magical.

Tenth, I'm thankful I can think. I like knowing that even while a so-called majority of Americans tell me I should believe in a certain religion, fear another and/or not question what my government is doing; I still get to complain about all of them. I don't necessarily like to complain – it's just that a lot of stuff in the world really doesn't make any sense to me. Some say it'll make more sense as I get older. I think that's code for, "You'll get so used to it you'll forget what really makes the most sense." It's good to know I have an outlet here in The Salem Leader and on my website at www.justinharter.com and can provide some sense of my logic to other people. Believe it or not, I get my supportive emails than negative about my writing. One person even implied I should run for President.

Lastly, as a final note to anyone who ever calls me. I love it when people leave me a voicemail and they don't start off by saying, "Hey, it's me!" There are a lot of "me's" out there and I only know one me and that's me. I'm horrible at recognizing voices over the phone. When you call me and leave a message, identify yourself and I'll be forever thankful.