

Here is the full transcript of award-winning film-maker and photographer Hailey Bartholomew's talk titled "365 Grateful Project" at TEDxQUT conference.

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**TRANSCRIPT:**

Yes, and in 2008, I discovered the secret to happiness. And that's why I'm here.

But before I discovered it, I was actually depressed. I felt incredibly... like life was a treadmill. Blah about life. Like there was no point that we were going to get married, have a couple of kids, buy a house, and you know, grow old and then die.

It sounds a bit dramatic because I am, but that is how I felt. And I was struggling to enjoy my life in any way. I had two healthy kids, a lovely partner, but it just did not feel anything for my life.

And so it was concerning me, because I wasn't being a great mum or a great partner, and I wanted to be those things. So, I went and I found a nun. I'd heard about this lady who was helping people with some counseling and kind of spiritual directions, sort of stuff.

And I'm not catholic, but I wanted a whole new perspective. And she suddenly gave me that.

And I sat down with her and I was kind of suggesting why I might be so unhappy. And she listened patiently and then she said to me: *"You know, I think the secret to happiness is reflection and gratitude."*

And at that time, I was like: *"It's a bit underwhelming."*

What does that mean in my life? And yes, I'm very grateful for my healthy kids. I know in my head that these are good things that I have, and I should be grateful.

But what about this feeling? I don't feel anything for it. And so, she helped me, and she said: *"Hailey, I want you to do a 10-day project, just take 10 minutes everyday, reflect through the day, really think through your conversations. You had breakfast, what did you do after that? And then see if there is anything there that pops out to you that you are grateful for. Not what you should, but what you feel."*

And so I took her advice and I did it. And it sparked something amazing within me because I started to see things I wouldn't otherwise have seen. And they weren't the things you think.

And that 10-day project was amazing, but I knew I needed more of that. I needed a lot more of that.

So, being a photographer, I decided I was going to do a photo a day for a whole year of something I was grateful for every single day. And I bought enough Polaroid film to do a year-long project.

And, this is kind of what it started to look like. Not that. Let's go back one. Yeah.

It was things like the color green. There are billion different shades of green there. I was suddenly one day just struck by it. It was my youngest daughter helping me down a step.

She is like 3, and she was like, "I'll help you down." It's just adorable. And, things like money on the meter when you have no money in your wallet. That is amazing! It is such a gift.

And I started to see things like rainy days, meant that I got to use my

favorite umbrellas. And, pancakes on a Sunday morning. They were so good, I didn't get to photograph them. Sorry. But they are there.

And, beautiful friends getting married. Little and beautiful, special little moments through every single day that made me delighted in my day.

Actually, through the project I learned quite a lot of things — sorry I keep doing it twice — and probably the biggest thing I learned was how my expectations on other people prevented me from really appreciating who they were. Namely my husband who is here, and I'm going to say it: he's not very romantic.

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This is what I thought anyway. I just didn't think he was very... didn't take me on dates, didn't buy a lot of flowers, and do all the things that in my head a husband should do.

And this one day I hadn't taken my grateful photo for the day, and I was scanning my life, basically: "what was I grateful for today?"

And I was looking around the room, and then I saw my husband serving dinner. And in the corner of my eye, I watched as he put the biggest piece of pie on my plate. The best piece of pie on my plate.

And, I was like whoa! I wouldn't have seen it if I hadn't been looking. And he was doing that every day actually. He was putting me fully first.

But I was not seeing it because I was not looking. And it completely changed my view of how I see people, particularly him.

And through the project he just continued to do beautiful things not even thinking about it. Everyday he would drive somewhere, he would always

hold my hand as we drove. He would sing our daughters to sleep with a ukulele.

And if I rang complaining one day, when he was at work: “Our house is too hot, we have no air-conditioning,” he would arrive with ice-cream.

And it really made me reevaluate our relationship and what my expectations were, and opened my eyes to who he was.

Actually, at the end of the project someone interviewed us. And they ask Andrew: *“What did you notice that was different within your relationship with Hailey?”*

And he said: *“I feel like I am enough for her now.”*

And that hit me hard, I’ve been married to him for 8 years at that point. And I was so sad that it had taken me eight years to see him. To see all the beautiful things he was doing for me every single day.

But I’m glad that I got there in the end, and I’m grateful for this project.

The other thing I noticed was nature. And it was so unexpected. But nature just spoke to me, so much. The color red that would shine just so differently if the sun was on it. When my daughter would put beautiful little flowers in my handbag; or mint, the smell of mint is amazing. It’s beautiful.

All the way weeds would dance when you drove pass your car. The wind would blow them. Or dandelions; I like dandelions all over my backyard. I think they are beautiful.

And all these little things started to make me feel so like I was blessed. I’m so lucky to be here, to see those little gifts. A beetle flew onto my daughter shirt one day in a car park. You could see she’s absolutely thrilled about

that.

But I was amazed, she had this beetle. It was like a piece of jewelry. It was amazing, and it stayed there long enough for me to take a photo, and she's like, "Get it off, get it off!" And I'm like, "Stay still."

Anyway, other thing I learned was about parenting. I had really felt like this was the most boring job I have ever had. And it was long, and there were lots of food, and lots of nappies, and things that were boring like dishes.

And people would always say: "What have you been up today?"

And I was like, "Don't ask me."

But this project showed me what a delight and an honor it was to be in their company. To be with them, as they, you know, offered to take my hand.

We were singing so loudly in the car as we drove pretending to be candy cans. Loosing their two front teeth. It is my privilege that I got that time with them. And I started to see that right when I was with them.

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I'm so grateful that I, while they were still little, that I saw what a gift it was.

One of the amazing things about this project is that it kind of spread like wild fire. I had a magazine article, and it was online and few people started to write and tell me their own stories with their grateful projects.

It's been a complete honor to have that. And this particular person is Amy

Guill. She and I become good friends.

But she wrote to me an email one day, not long after she had given birth to twin daughters. And one of them, 24 days later died of a heart complication. And I would like to read to you a piece of her letter to me.

And Amy knows that I'm reading this.

*"The next few days were hard. I had to pick myself up and keep going as I had Anabella, 3 years old, and Penny who needed me. And I was so lost. It was funny though because, for some reasons, your article kept coming back to me. I dug out the magazine, and I looked at it again. I checked out your website. I decided that this was how I was going to cope. Instead of looking at what I've lost, I was going to focus on what I gained. And be truly grateful for having Rosie in our lives even for such a short time.*

*In her 24 days, she had taught me more than I learned in a lifetime. I was grateful for the chance to hold her, to feed her, to bath her, and tell her that I loved her. No longer would I take the small things for granted in my life. Life is too short, and I've decided that each day I will count my blessings and so, my grateful project "Count your blessings" begin.*

*And now, I've taken 73 blessing photos, and I'm truly grateful for them. The project has gotten me through such a hard time. Yes, I still have my moments of sadness, but I've so many moments of joy. I've chosen to be happy. And this week I've been looking back at my album and reflecting on where I've come from.*

*And I want to thank you, Hailey, for being an inspiration. For you, I am truly grateful. Amy."*

And I cannot tell you what a honor it is to be part of someone's story in that way. Amy really, really reminded me that even in the hard things in life that we can choose to be grateful, that we can find the most amazing

treasure in the most awful things.

You really do find what you are looking for. And in my life, when I have had hard times and things go wrong, I really found that gratefulness has helped me to learn the most I can possibly learn and appreciate everything that's happening, and to find the gold in the mud.

And now I really... when I looked back on my project and actually my life, I see delight, I see beauty, I see a life I'm incredibly rich and grateful for. It isn't that I own a house, it isn't happiness outside of me, it is within me.

And I learned that, that is where my happiness is, it's in here.

And through this project I've surprisingly been able to help other people find out that, too, and that's been an absolute honor.

Thank you very much for having me.

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