

My Three Words:

**Creativity**

**Faith**

**Gratitude**

Let's take these words one at a time.

**Creativity:**

I remember being nine and ten years old writing short stories, going out with my first camera. Creativity has always been part of who I am. Try taking it away from me and I will cease being Chris Jennings.

Being creative helps keep me centered. Whether through writing or photography, if I didn't have these outlets I would become much more anxious. In fact, when I through long periods of not writing or not being behind my camera, I feel my stress level rising.

Growing up wasn't easy for me. So many challenges. Writing is how I released much of the stress that swirled around me. I needed to write when I grew up. When I didn't spend the time writing, my irritability spiked. It's only because, life wasn't easy for me. Writing brought me back.

Creativity is an important part of my life not just because it helps keeps me centered, but also because it is a gift I have and I feel that every gift we are given should be shared. We who are creative don't create to hide our art away. All art is meant to be shared.

Being creative means sharing our gifts

**Faith:**

I understand that this can be a tricky word for some of us at SUUS. As one of the tenets of Unitarianism states:

**We all come with our own belief systems and we all can believe what we feel works for us.**

For me, faith has carried me through some extremely challenging times in my life. So much has happened in my life:

**Times when I should have not even survived**

**From experiencing multiple seizures as a six month old infant to having a subdural hematoma. These seizures have had long lasting but no underlying physical effects.**

I sincerely believe faith helped me survive through all of these challenges I faced. I understand that without my strong faith in myself and in the divine I don't think I'd be here standing before you all today. Faith doesn't have to be a religious word.

**It can be spiritual.**

**It can be strength.**

**It can be a belief in something where there is no proof.**

For me Faith is all three of these statements and more. Faith is one of the tenets I live by now.

**Faith in knowing that I'm what where I'm supposed to be.**

**Faith in knowing that everything that happens is happening for my greatest good.**

**Gratitude:**

Being grateful is important to everyone's wellbeing. If we can follow this simple rule:

**Be grateful for what we have.**

Our lives will improve exponentially. It can be difficult to follow when something happens to distress us. What we have to remember though is that things can always be worse. Look for the positive in every challenge we face and you'll find your life turning around. You can always find something in a challenge to be grateful for. It's how I do my best to live my life now. You may not see the gift when you're in the middle of the challenge, but I imagine we can all look back at something that happened to each of us that initially was a negative but later we realized something good came from it.

The other thing I've learned as far as being grateful goes is:

**When a challenge arises that we have no control over, why stress over it? Stressing over something we have no control over will only cause us more anxiety which in turn will only hurt us physically and emotionally in the long run. If there's nothing we can do to change a situation don't stress and look for gratitude.**

That's what I mean by being grateful for everything whether positive or negative. If we can make an effort to do this you'll see life will be much easier. Learn gratitude.