**TRANSCRIPT OF TEDX TALK**

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When I graduated UCLA, I moved to Northern California, and I lived in a little town called Elk, on the Mendocino coast. And I didn't have a phone or TV, but I had US mail. And life was good back then -- if you could remember it. I'd go to the general store for a cup of coffee and a brownie, I'd ship my film to San Francisco, and lo and behold, two days later, it would end up on my front door, which was way better than having to fight the traffic of Hollywood. I didn't have much money,

but I had time and a sense of wonder.

So I started shooting time-lapse photography. It would take me a month to shoot a four-minute roll of film, because that's all I could afford.

I've been shooting time-lapse flowers continuously, nonstop, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for over 30 years. And to see them move is a dance I'll never get tired of. Their beauty immerses us with color, taste, touch. It also provides a third of the food we eat.

Beauty and seduction are nature's tools for survival, because we protect what we fall in love with. It opens our hearts and makes us realize we are a part of nature, and we're not separate from it. When we see ourselves in nature, it also connects us to every one of us, because it's clear that it's all connected in one.

When people see my images, a lot of times they'll say, "Oh my God." Have you ever wondered what that meant? The "oh" means it caught your attention; it makes you present, makes you mindful. The "my" means it connects with something deep inside your soul. It creates a gateway for your inner voice to rise up and be heard. And "God"? God is that personal journey we all want to be on, to be inspired, to feel like we're connected to a universe that celebrates life.

Did you know that 80 percent of the information we receive comes through our eyes, and if you compare light energy to musical scales, it would only be one octave that the naked eye could see, which is right in the middle? And aren't we grateful for our brains, that can take this electrical impulse that comes from light energy to create images in order for us to explore our world? And aren't we grateful that we have hearts that can feel these vibrations in order for us to allow ourselves to feel the pleasure and the beauty of nature?

Nature's beauty is a gift that cultivates appreciation and gratitude. So, I have a gift I want to share with you today, a project I'm working on called "Happiness Revealed." And it'll give us a glimpse into that perspective -- from the point of view of a child and an elderly man -- of that world.

**Little girl:** When I watch TV, it's just some shows that you just -- that are pretend. And when you explore, you get more imagination than you already had, and when you get more imagination, it makes you want to go deeper in so you can get more and see beautifuller things, like the path, if it's a path, it could lead you to a beach or something, and it could be beautiful.

**Brother David Steindl-Rast:** Do you think this is just another day in your life? It's not just another day. It's the one day that is given to you: today.

It's given to you. It's a gift. It's the only gift that you have right now. And the only appropriate response is gratefulness.

If you do nothing else but to cultivate that response to the great gift that this unique day is, if you learn to respond as if it were the first day in your life and the very last day, then you will have spent this day very well.

Begin by opening your eyes and be surprised that you have eyes you can open, that incredible array of colors that is constantly offered to us for our pure enjoyment. Look at the sky. We so rarely look at the sky. We so rarely note how different it is from moment to moment, with clouds coming and going. We just think of the weather, and even with the weather, we don't think of all the many nuances of weather. We just think of "good weather" and "bad weather." This day, right now, has unique weather, maybe a kind that will never exactly, in that form, come again. The formation of clouds in the sky will never be the same as it is right now. Open your eyes. Look at that.

Look at the faces of people whom you meet. Each one has an incredible story behind their face, a story that you could never fully fathom, not only their own story, but the story of their ancestors. We all go back so far, and in this present moment, on this day, all the people you meet, all that life from generations and from so many places all over the world flows together and meets you here, like a life-giving water, if you only open your heart and drink.

Open your heart to the incredible gifts that civilization gives to us. You flip a switch, and there is electric light. You turn a faucet, and there is warm water and cold water, and drinkable water. It's a gift that millions and millions in the world will never experience.

So these are just a few of an enormous number of gifts to which we can open your heart. And so I wish you that you will open your heart to all these blessings, and let them flow through you, that everyone whom you will meet on this day will be blessed by you, just by your eyes, by your smile, by your touch, just by your presence. Let the gratefulness overflow into blessing all around you.

And then, it will really be a good day.

**About Brother David**



DAVID STEINDL-RAST was born Franz Kuno Steindl-Rast on July 12, 1926, in Vienna, Austria, and spent his early years there and in a small village in the Alps. He spent all of his teen years under the Nazi occupation, was drafted into the army, but never went to the front lines. He eventually escaped and was hidden by his mother until the occupation ended.

After the war, Franz studied art, anthropology, and psychology, receiving an MA from the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts and a PhD from the University of Vienna. In 1952 he followed his family who had emigrated to the United States. In 1953 he joined a newly founded Benedictine community in Elmira, NY, Mount Saviour Monastery, where he became “Brother David.” In 1958/59 Brother David was a Postdoctoral Fellow at Cornell University, where he also became the first Roman Catholic to hold the Thorpe Lectureship, following Bishop J.D.R. Robinson and Paul Tillich.

After twelve years of monastic training and studies in philosophy and theology, Brother David was sent by his abbot to participate in Buddhist-Christian dialogue, for which he received Vatican approval in 1967. His Zen teachers were Hakuun Yasutani Roshi, Soen Nakagawa Roshi, Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, and Eido Shimano Roshi. He co-founded the Center for Spiritual Studies in 1968 and received the 1975 Martin Buber Award for his achievements in building bridges between religious traditions.

Together with Thomas Merton, Brother David helped launch a renewal of religious life. From 1970 on, he became a leading figure in the House of Prayer movement, which affected some 200,000 members of religious orders in the United States and Canada. Since the 1970s Brother David has been a member of cultural historian [William Irwin Thompson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Irwin_Thompson)‘s [Lindisfarne Association](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lindisfarne_Association).”

For decades, Brother David divided his time between periods of hermit’s life and extensive lecture tours on five continents. On a two-month lecture tour in Australia, for example, he gave 140 lectures and travelled 12,000 miles within Australia without backtracking. His wide spectrum of audiences has included starving students in Zaire and faculty at Harvard and Columbia Universities, Buddhist monks and Sufi retreatants, Papago Indians and German intellectuals, New Age communes and Naval Cadets at Annapolis, missionaries on Polynesian islands and gatherings at the United Nations, Green Berets and participants at international peace conferences. Brother David has brought spiritual depth into the lives of countless people whom he touches through his lectures, his workshops, and his [writings](https://gratefulness.org/explore/resources/?type=articles&filter=brother-david).

He has contributed to a wide range of books and periodicals from the Encyclopedia Americana and The New Catholic Encyclopedia, to the New Age Journal and Parabola Magazine. [His books](https://gratefulness.org/explore/resources/?type=books&filter=brother-david) have been translated into many languages. [Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer](https://gratefulness.org/resource/gratefulness-heart-of-prayer/) and [A Listening Heart](https://gratefulness.org/resource/a-listening-heart/) have been reprinted and anthologized for more than two decades. Brother David co-authored [Belonging to the Universe](https://gratefulness.org/resource/belonging-to-the-universe/) (winner of the 1992 American Book Award), a dialogue on new paradigm thinking in science and theology with physicist, Fritjof Capra. His dialogue with Buddhists produced [The Ground We Share: Buddhist and Christian Practice](http://gratefulness.org/resource/dsr-ground-we-share/), co-authored with Robert Aitken Roshi. His most recent books are [Words of Common Sense for MInd, Body and Soul](http://gratefulness.org/resource/dsr-words-of-common-sense/); [Deeper than Words:  Living the Apostles’ Creed](https://gratefulness.org/resource/deeper-than-words/); [99 Blessings:  An Invitation to Life;](https://gratefulness.org/resource/99-blessings-book/) [The Way of Silence: Engaging the Sacred in Daily Life](https://gratefulness.org/resource/way-silence-book/);  [Faith beyond Belief: Spirituality for our Times](https://gratefulness.org/resource/faith-beyond-belief-spirituality-times-conversation/); and his autobiography, [i am through you so i.](https://gratefulness.org/resource/i-am-through-you-so-i/" \t "_blank)

Brother David has contributed chapters or interviews to well over 30 books. An article by Brother David was included in The Best Spiritual Writing, 1998. His many audio and videotapes are widely distributed.

At present, Brother David serves a worldwide Network for Grateful Living, through Gratefulness.org, an interactive website with several thousand participants daily from more than 240 countries and territories.