



06.04.08 Wedding day of longest-known friend. So happy!



07.04.08 Breakfast with dear friends.



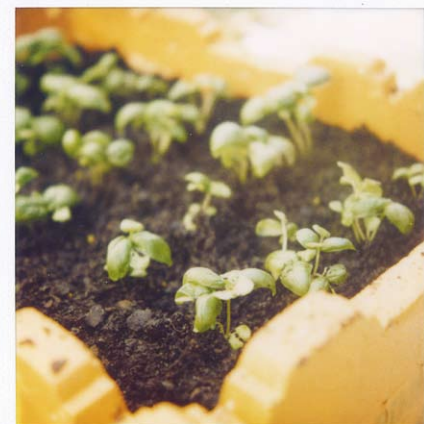
20.04.08 I love market day!



29.04.08 Perfect moments. So grateful.



01.05.08 Change of season.



02.05.08 Rows of basil freshly planted. Love it!



13.05.08 She turned and offered her little hand.



19.05.08 Breakfast... and all made by my hubbie!



21.05.08 Does it get cuter?

PHOTOGRAPHY: HAILEY BARTHOLOMEW

365

REASONS TO BE GRATEFUL

A year ago Brisbane-based photographer and mother-of-two Hailey Bartholomew, 30, embarked on 365 Days of Grateful, a personal project for which every day for one year, she took a single Polaroid photograph of something she was grateful for. Here, she tells Laura Venuto how this simple act made her truly appreciate each day like never before.



WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START 365 DAYS OF GRATEFUL?
I've always been a bit melancholy. So I had been visiting a nun for a while, sort of as counselling, but really just wanting to know how to be happier. She told me I should reflect on each day and see if there was anything I was grateful for. I started by just writing those things down. But as a photographer, I'm not a great writer. It seemed a much more fun way to do it would be to take a photo of it. And I had seen on various Flickr communities (an online photo-sharing website) that other people had done '365 photo series' of themselves – so they'd take a photo

of themselves every day for a year. But they're so boring! I always thought there had to be a better way to do that series, and because I wanted to be more grateful, I decided to combine the two.

WHAT CHANGES DID YOU NOTICE AS THE PROJECT WENT ON?
I found that in the practice of doing it every day I started to catch things I would have otherwise walked straight past. Even a gorgeous old tree or a beautifully coloured bug struck me a bit more because you're looking out for it. It's easy to spend our lives rushing from one thing to the next, but this allowed me to kind of press pause each day and savour those beautiful moments that would otherwise pass me by.

DOES REFLECTING ON EACH DAY HELP YOU LIVE IN THE MOMENT?
Definitely. Amazingly so. Usually at Christmas and New Year's I get a bit

melancholy because I tend to really look back on the year and think, 'Oh I'm not where I wanted to be,' and I just never feel as if I'm winning. But this year it felt really different. I feel a bit more whole just from being grateful.
I actually feel quite different from six months ago even. I woke up the other day and thought, 'I'm so happy lately!' Things still go wrong of course, but I just feel like sometimes I could cry – and that sounds really overdramatic – but it just wells up in me that I am so lucky, I have so much and all I need, and so much love in my life.
I think what it does is, when I get really busy and stressed with work I forget what I have and the everyday practice of this project pulls me back to what is important – constantly – which is really good for someone like me because I get a bit driven and forget what I really want. This project just puts it all in perspective.



30.05.08 Sick and rainy. Perfect moments still all around.



08.06.08 Flying little kite in the most lovely weather.



09.06.08 I like rain... it brings out the cute umbrellas.



10.6.08 Funny drawing game that made us all laugh.



11.06.08 Long day... his arms make me so happy.



14.07.08 Candlelit dinner.

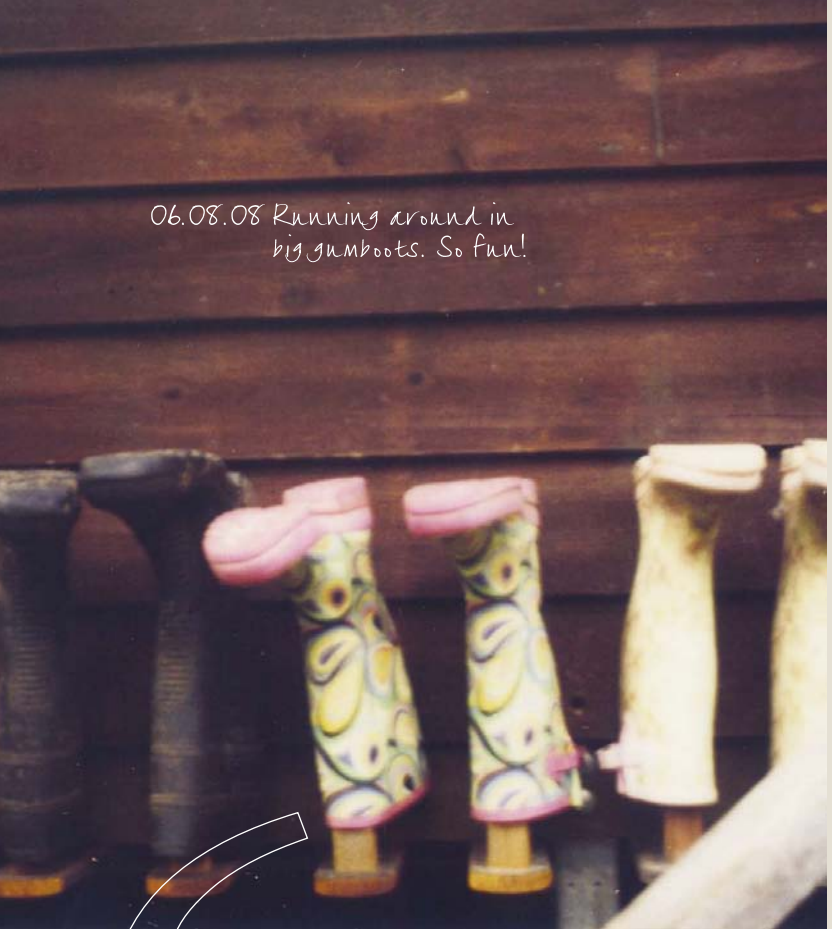
WE ALL HAVE DOWNRIGHT CRAPPY DAYS WHERE WE THINK WE JUST SHOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN OUT OF BED – DO YOU EVER STRUGGLE TO FIND SOMETHING YOU ARE GRATEFUL FOR?

I did worry I wouldn't find something some days and I am really anti fake emotion, so I made a vow that I had to truly feel grateful for it or I wouldn't photograph it. And there are days when it's an effort, and I have to make myself do it. My least favourite time is when my kids are sick – I get really stressed when they're unwell. But one of my favourite photos is when my youngest daughter Poppy was sick and she couldn't get to sleep so I put an iPod on for her and put headphones on her ears because I thought that would help. In the end she fell asleep and it was the cutest picture of her with these giant headphones over her ears fast asleep. It was just a really great moment for me because it was in the midst of my least favourite thing. Apart from that, sometimes my least favourite days end with me on the couch with some chocolate... and that's what I'm most grateful for!

YOU HAVE COMPILED ALL THE POLAROID PICTURES IN A LEATHER-BOUND BOOK – WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO WITH IT?

I want to photograph it and give my girls one each. Before I started the project, I saw in my two daughters that they have everything; they have the world compared to so many kids, but they were really ungrateful! And I read somewhere that you need to change yourself first so I thought that if I did this project, hopefully it would rub off, and it does. I have noticed they say 'Oh wow, thank you,' or 'Isn't this beautiful,' even for very little things – because I'm doing and saying these things more. And I think it's also really nice for them that when they leave a little note that says 'I love you mum' and I photograph that – it makes them realise I've truly taken notice of that, when it's so easy to be busy with something else and let those things slip by. Zali, my eldest daughter, is going to do her own grateful project this year.

06.08.08 Running around in big gumboots. So fun!

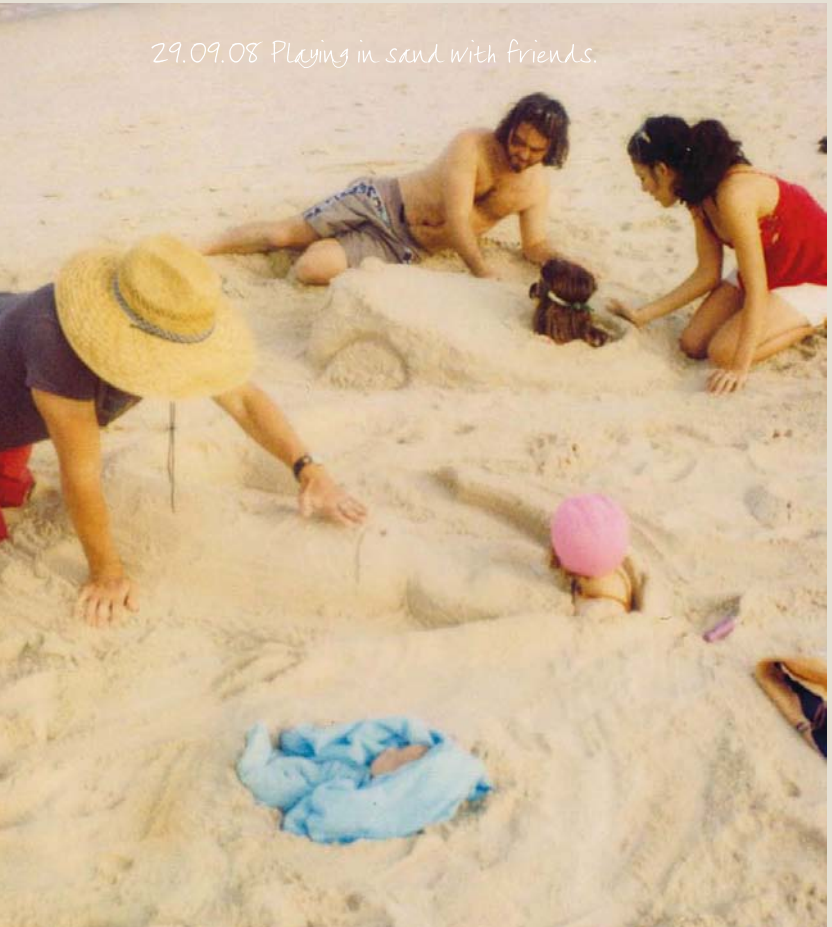


23.08.08 Pretending to be a candy cane.



...WHEN I GET REALLY BUSY AND STRESSED WITH WORK I FORGET WHAT I HAVE AND THE EVERYDAY PRACTICE OF THIS PROJECT PULLS ME BACK TO WHAT IS IMPORTANT – CONSTANTLY...

29.09.08 Playing in sand with friends.



11.10.08 Jacaranda petals.



discussion. gratitude

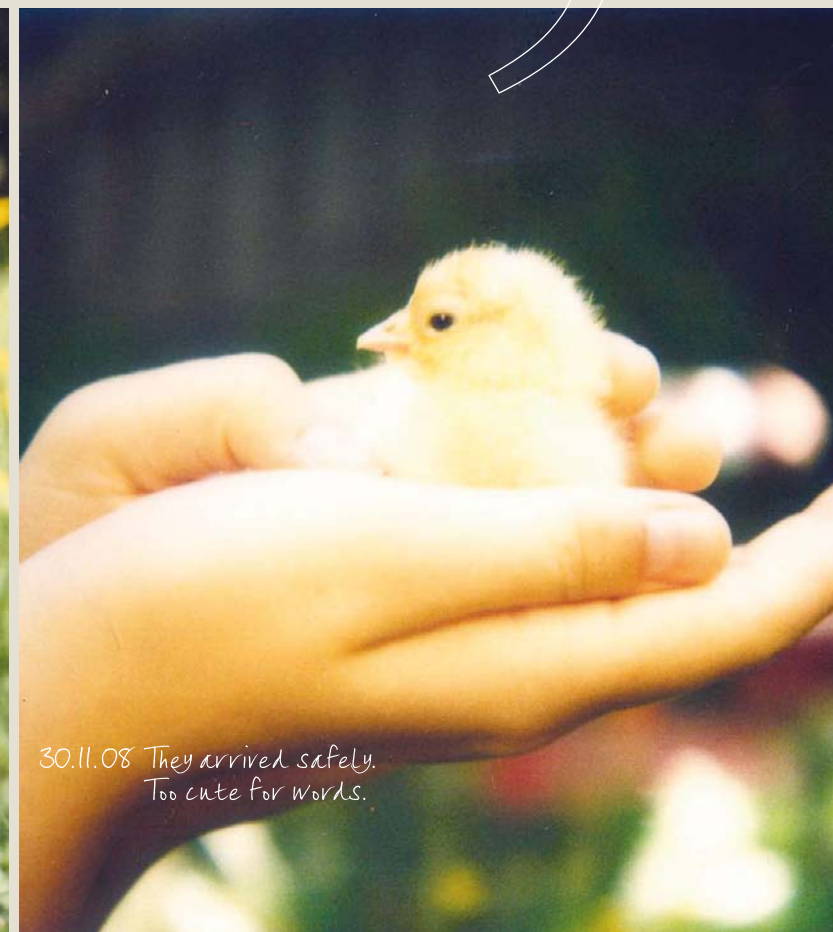
05.11.08 Finding hearts on the beach.

... ALL THIS STUFF IS WHAT IS MAKING MY LIFE REALLY RICH. IT MAKES ME THINK 'WOW, WOULDN'T IT BE A SHAME TO ZOOM THROUGH YOUR LIFE AND MISS THIS? THIS IS THE BEST PART.'

17.11.08 Back yard full of yellow weeds and I love it!



30.10.08 Love all around.



30.11.08 They arrived safely.
Too cute for words.

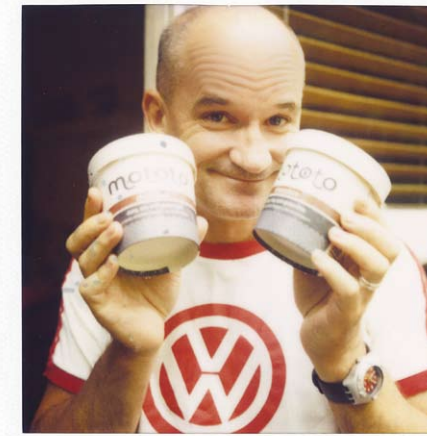
RELATIONSHIPS OFTEN GET BOGGED DOWN BY FUTURE WORRIES, OR PAST ISSUES THAT KEEP RESURFACING – HAS FOCUSING ON THE PRESENT HAD AN AFFECT ON YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR HUSBAND?

Yes I do think it has. I'm less dissatisfied with him and that sounds really mean, because he's an amazing partner and it has nothing to do with that – but often you get stuck in the 'Oh, he didn't do this or he didn't do that.' Because I'm looking at all the good things I feel incredibly grateful for him a lot more. Sometimes he does amazing things. We've been married for 10 years and he's just generally so lovely and giving but I realised that when I'm really obsessed about what's going on in my head, I miss all this stuff. As an example, (and I put this one in the book), I was writing this really whiny email to him one day saying 'I'm so hot; I hate this office,' and he's in airconditioning at work. The next thing he arrives with two tubs of ice-cream for lunch! But those things are easy to forget when you're rushing on to the next thing and so I think documenting it lodges it in my brain a bit better. When you're looking out for good things in your life, it's as if they stand out more. Even if I don't photograph them, they stand out now.

YOUR PROJECT WILL COME TO AN END THIS MONTH; DO YOU THINK IT WILL HAVE A LASTING EFFECT?

Definitely. Psychologists talk about the neural groove – that you get stuck in this particular mindset – and I think I had a bit of a mindset that things don't work for me. And this is teaching me to be so grateful for those tiny little moments of life. There's that quote that it's not the destination it's the journey, and that keeps popping up in my head because I think, 'Oh yeah – all this stuff is what is making my life really rich.' It makes me think, 'Wow, wouldn't it be a shame to zoom through your life and miss this? This is the best part.' ■

To see Hailey's Grateful Project, visit www.youcantbeserious.com.au and click on Flickr. Want to see what the Notebook: team are grateful for? We tried Hailey's project for a week – you can check out the results at www.notebookmagazine.com.



03.12.08 He arrives with ice-cream for lunch. So happy!



18.12.08 Mosaic project. I love it.



02.01.09 Girlfriend, coffee, chatting and op shops!



06.12.08 Stinky hot. Grateful for cold showers and fans.



25.12.08 Filled with love. Grateful for a good day.



13.01.09 I love all they are learning.