

It all started just before Thanksgiving. My daughter had a temperature of 103 and a bad cough. I had kept her home from school, and didn't plan on her going back for a while. The next day, as the twenty-two guests arrived for lunch, I noticed that one of the cousins had a similar cough, but I was really too busy to be thinking about illness. Well, Thanksgiving came and went; the plates and cutlery were washed, the tables were put away, and everything was back to normal. But then I noticed that one of the guests hadn't left. He had actually not even been invited. He was a most unwelcome(1) guest, and his name was 'The Flu'. I opened the front door and asked him to leave, but he he just smiled at me. He was comfortable, and obviously planned on staying.

Before I knew it, everyone was ill: coughs, temperatures, weakness, and stomach problems. Most of our relatives who had been with us were also miserably sick. I, at that point, wasn't. Usually, I take care of everyone else, and I'm fine. But it was my turn. I had looked into the face of The Flu too many times. After a few days of doing nothing, and feeling sorry for myself(2), I went to the shops. "Anna, is that you? You look terrible!" said a friend of mine I bumped into. "Oh, thanks," I said, not feeling very thankful, and not wanting to hear any more about how I looked. I made a few phone calls and wasn't recognized, "Anna, you sound awful!" was the comment I received. I'm not surprised. I sounded as if I had gravel in my throat(3).

After a few more days, I was much better, and so was everyone else. In fact, I have bounced back. My energy level is up to the roof. I'm studying for my classes, seeing friends, and rushing around preparing for Christmas while listening to a very loud version of Handel's 'Messiah'. Now that the gravel has disappeared

from my throat, I can do a podcast. It's good to be back! And if you want any advice from me, be very careful which guests you invite to your house.

1. 'A most unwelcome guest' can also be expressed as 'a very unwelcome guest'. The word 'most' sounds more formal, and is good in stories. This use of 'a+most' can be used with all sorts of adjectives.

a. She was a most gracious relative, always giving and patient.

b. They were a most unbearable gang of young men, always causing conflicts and violence.

2. 'To feel sorry for oneself' is like feeling sad about your situation. You feel pity for yourself.

a. The dog is feeling sorry for himself because he's lost his bone.

b. We all feel sorry for ourselves sometimes, but it is healthier to try and be thankful.

3. 'Gravel' is a noun that is used in the expression of having a bad voice because of illness. We often use the term, 'a gravelly voice,' which describes a rough voice that is not clear, as if something is stuck in the throat. Some people might have this without being ill.

a. The old fisherman had rough, wrinkly skin, and a gravelly voice.

b. My throat was feeling better; it wasn't sore any more, but my voice was gravelly.