

## **Your Personal Coach**

Kathleen Brehony, Ph.D.

**Dear Kathleen,**

**My husband is only 37 years old, but never has any energy to do anything with our kids or me. He spends most weekends sleeping late (sometimes until noon), and then just hangs around watching TV. We ask him to go with us to the beach or the park but he says “no.” The kids play sports, but he always has a headache or some other problem that prevents him from attending their games. He always says “I’m too tired,” when we ask him to participate in anything. He works a full-time job, but it is not physically demanding (it’s a desk job for the county), and he is almost always home by 5:30. He eats dinner, spends some time watching TV, and is in bed by 9:30. He gets about 10 hours of sleep a night. Do you have any ideas about how to make him more interested in spending time with me and the kids?**

**-- Desperate Housewife**

Dear Desperate,

Your husband is certainly missing out on the basic concept of being alive. He seems instead to be just going through the motions. It is not normal or healthy for someone his age to be so listless and tired all the time. In fact, I know many seniors who have far more energy than he does. Frequent headaches that prevent an active, engaged life need to be investigated. The first order of business is for your husband to have a thorough physical examination by his doctor. There are many illnesses – some serious and some very treatable – that may be causing the kind of lethargy he has been experiencing. What is most important is knowing what is causing his behavior. With appropriate medical tests, his doctor can rule out certain diseases and/or treat any that are affecting him.

If your husband is given a clean bill of health from his physician, I would also consider depression as a possible reason for his lack of interest and motivation, as well as his excessive need for sleep. Depression does not always include the full spectrum of symptoms such as feelings of overwhelming sadness, crying, or lack of appetite. Many people experience depression more physically than emotionally, and sleep disturbances, as well as mental and physical fatigue, can be key signs of depression.

Depression is one of the most common psychological problems. It affects nearly everyone, either through personal experience or through the depression of a loved one. The research shows that, each year, more than seventeen million Americans will experience a period of clinical depression that interferes with normal functioning and causes problems with work, family, or social adjustment. If depression appears to be part of his problem, your husband’s doctor will consider prescribing an antidepressant as well as referring him to a psychotherapist or counselor. A good counselor can help him to better understand his feelings, change some of the ways he is thinking about his life, and support him in making critical life changes. The good news is that with proper treatment, and if he is willing to work at it, he can recover from depression.

I suggest talking with him. Show him your letter and my response. Listen to what he says. Make a doctor's appointment right now. It is important for him to understand that he can reclaim his life; a life filled with meaningful relationships with his family, and a passionate feeling of aliveness. Life is sweet but short; remind him that spending one's free time sleeping or watching TV is a waste of a precious gift.

Send your personal coaching questions to [kathleen@fullpotentialliving.com](mailto:kathleen@fullpotentialliving.com) or call 473-4004. Kathleen is a personal and executive coach, clinical psychologist, and writer. (©2005 Kathleen Brehony. All Rights Reserved.) Columns are archived at [www.fullpotentialliving.com](http://www.fullpotentialliving.com).