

## Your Personal Coach

Kathleen Brehony, Ph.D.

Dear Kathleen,

**My family always gathers at our home for Thanksgiving. It's a big crowd -- our five children and twelve grandchildren travel a long way to celebrate this holiday with us -- and we always have a great time. But this year has been bad for us financially. My husband was laid off, and I had to take a pay cut to avoid being laid off. Our little bit of investment in the stock market has still not recovered, and we have few resources. In past years, we've always provided all the food, wine, and even little presents for the grandchildren. Sometimes we spend more than \$1,000 for the holiday, and the following weekend. We can't do that this year unless we dip into our savings, which are dwindling rapidly. I'm not sure how to handle this situation with my family.**

**-- Sally**

Dear Sally,

It sounds like a tough year for you and your husband, and I'm sorry for that. There is no reason to add any more stress to your life by trying to solve this problem alone. Sit down and talk with your husband so that you are both in on the decision about how you will handle this year's Thanksgiving holiday.

I suggest being open and honest with your grown children. They must realize that their dad has been laid off, and it doesn't take a brain surgeon to figure that money might be tight with one person in a two-income family no longer bringing home a paycheck. Tell them that that this year you would like to try something different, and my guess is that you'll never go back to the old way, even if you win the lottery. I think it may be a relief for everyone, to split the expenses for food and beverages, and split the work for your large and lively gathering.

It sounds like you have a wonderful, close family, and it's my bet that your kids will be eager to pitch in. Your sons and daughters might each contribute a special dish for the feast. Even kids can participate by helping to make cookies or pies. While you're at it, why not make certain that every one helps out with everything?!

You don't have to be an ardent feminist to believe that both genders should help out with the extra work that holidays require. I can remember many Thanksgiving Days in the kitchen with my mother, grandmother, aunts, and cousins (just the girls), while the men were watching football games on TV, and my brother and the boy cousins were playing kickball in the backyard. I was just a wee lass without a clear philosophical reference, but I clearly remember saying, "Hey! What's *this* about?!"

Entertaining five children and a dozen grandkids is a terrific way to spend a holiday that is all about reflecting on the many ways we've been blessed. But you will have more fun, be more relaxed, and have more time and energy to enjoy the company of your family if everyone does his/her share of the extra work for such a large gathering.

Don't worry about not having presents for the kids. You will be able to spend extra time with them now that you'll have some help in the kitchen and the cleanup. Make cards or crafts with the little kids, and spend time talking with the older ones. Write each one a personal note and tell him/her just how thankful you are to have them as

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your grandchild. I assure you that this is a more precious gift than the latest Barbie or Power Ranger. It's a treasure they will never forget.

I'm sorry it has been a bad year financially for you and your husband. But from the sound of your letter, I'm guessing you will feel very rich indeed on this (group-effort) Thanksgiving, surrounded by the love and togetherness of your family..

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. (©2003 Kathleen Brehony. All Rights Reserved.) Columns are archived at [www.fullpotentialliving.com](http://www.fullpotentialliving.com).