

## Your Personal Coach

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Since this column will run the day before Thanksgiving, I thought that some reflections on this holiday might be a nice departure from my usual Q&A format.

What a year this has been for so many of us! I don't know if it was Mars being so close to Earth, or the tropical wave off the coast of Africa that spawned Hurricane Isabel. In any case, Isabel is responsible for the chaos that so many have experienced lately. But as we continue to heal and recover, Thanksgiving offers a time for reflection and an opportunity to count our blessings. Surely the Pilgrims and Native Americans didn't invent this distinctly American holiday merely to launch the Christmas shopping season or rationalize über eating marathons, did they?

As we sit down at our tables, it's my hope that you will be surrounded by the love of family and friends, that your meal will be delicious, but most importantly, that your heart will be grateful.

This fall has been a difficult one for me. Spared the brunt of Isabel's wrath, I only had to deal with a dozen fallen trees and a ripped up yard. Still, it cost a bundle. But then things got worse. My father went into kidney failure, was in the ICU for almost five weeks and was close to death at least four different times. My thirteen-year-old Yellow Lab – Dorothy – was diagnosed with what appears to be bone cancer or, we're praying, a bone infection. Her kidneys are starting to act up because of the medicine we're using to treat the bone pain. I found myself weeping on multiple occasions over the last month and wondering how I would cope with these losses. Have you ever felt that your heart was so broken open that you weren't sure how to take the next step? That's where I've been lately.

And then one morning last week I awakened to an epiphany of sorts. The sun was coming up over the lake behind my house. Geese and ducks flew in with loud quacking and honking. I was overwhelmed the sheer beauty of our island. My thoughts turned to all the blessings I have: my dear friends who comfort me in my sadness and celebrate my successes; my health; my partner; and my dear old dog who is hanging in there. My father is now home from the hospital. The doctors say it is a "miracle." Dorothy looks a little stronger and is eating a little better. At least she's tearing through "Begging Strips" by the bagful. I won't forget any of these blessings when I sit down to Thanksgiving dinner tomorrow.

Here are a few reminders about the importance of giving thanks – something to reflect on over coffee and pumpkin pie:

- "We give thanks for unknown blessings already on their way." -- Native American chant
- "Who does not thank for little will not thank for much." -- Estonian proverb
- "Got no check books, got no banks. Still I'd like to express my thanks - I got the sun in the mornin' and the moon at night." -- Irving Berlin
- "The pilgrims made seven times more graves than huts ... nevertheless, they set aside a day of thanksgiving." --H. W. Westermayer
- "Not what we say about our blessings, but how we use them, is the true measure of our thanksgiving." -- WT Purkiser

- “The unthankful heart... discovers no mercies; but let the thankful heart sweep through the day and, as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find, in every hour, some heavenly blessings!” -- Henry Ward Beecher
- “A thankful heart is not only the greatest virtue, but the parent of all other virtues.” – Cicero
- “Some people complain because God put thorns on roses, while others give praise for putting roses among thorns.” – Anonymous
- “I do not think of all the misery, but of the glory that remains. Go outside into the fields, nature and the sun, go out and seek happiness in yourself and in God. Think of the beauty that again and again discharges itself within and without you and be happy.” – Anne Frank
- “As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.” – John F. Kennedy

Then, of course, there is the traditional 8000 calorie Thanksgiving poem:

May your stuffing be tasty  
 May your turkey plump,  
 May your potatoes and gravy  
 have nary a lump.  
 May your yams be delicious  
 and your pies take the prize,  
 and may your Thanksgiving dinner  
 stay off your thighs!

Happy Thanksgiving!

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).