

## Your Personal Coach

Kathleen Brehony, Ph.D.

**Dear Kathleen,**

**Recently, my sister-in-law, Melissa, lost a lot of weight (more than one hundred pounds). Ever since she became thin, she has been a monster. She wears clothes that are “revealing,” tight, and made for teenagers or women half her age (she’s in her forties). I’m a little bit heavy (but no where near as big as she was) and although I’ve tried to lose weight, I haven’t been successful. After Thanksgiving dinner at her house and when dessert was being served, she said, “None for me, thanks. Give my share to Debbie. She doesn’t care if she’s fat!” I’m very sensitive about my weight and was humiliated and angry. Our family gathers at my house for Christmas dinner and I don’t even want to include her. My husband tells me to “Just let it go,” because he doesn’t want to create problems with his brother. Should I just “let it go?” I don’t feel like it.**

**-- Debbie**

Dear Amy,

Melissa should be proud of her accomplishment and I’m certain it took a lot of strength and hard work. She has improved her health and self-esteem. It’s a shame, though, that she dropped all of her emotional intelligence and people skills with the weight.

Just letting it go is easier said than done and, even if it were possible, this is not the best strategy for you. You are angry and justifiably so. Melissa’s comment was thoughtless and painful to you. She may be so full of herself that she may not even know how deeply she hurt your feelings. To her it might have been an offhand comment but to you, it was like a dagger to the heart.

It would be a shame to add further injury to this insult by assaulting your family’s unity during the holidays. In spite of what the retailers would have us think, the holidays are supposed to be a time for families to gather in love and harmony. I don’t think you have any other choice, Debbie, but to talk with your sister-in-law and tell her how you feel. This may be difficult – even anxiety-provoking – but you will experience a sense of relief and self-empowerment by getting this off your chest.

Have this conversation in private. There’s no need to bring anyone else into it and that includes your husband and hers. Tell her that you admire her weight loss success and that you don’t begrudge her feeling good about herself because of it. Then tell her how her comment affected you. Be very specific about what she said and when she said it. Give her an opportunity to apologize and, if she does, accept it gracefully. If she tries to make light of her comment and your feelings don’t let her get away with it. “I was only kidding,” she might say. Then you must reply that this is not how you reacted to it. It’s my hope that her insensitive comment was just that and not consciously intended to hurt you.

Keep the conversation on that specific issue. Don’t bring up that fact that her wardrobe shift has her dressing like teenager. Avoid the temptation to ask, “So, did you get your fashion tips from Britney Spears or Christina Aguilera?” Don’t bring up that fact that you think she’s become a monster since she lost weight. These kinds of

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comments would make it too easy for her to latch onto and allow her to believe that you are simply jealous of her new svelte look. Stay on task and focused on your feelings and specifically just how her comment affected you.

Perhaps, Melissa may have something to teach you. If you are sensitive about your weight, it would be worthwhile to begin an active program of healthy eating and exercise. Don't do this for anyone else but yourself. You may discover that you, too, have the power to realize your ambitions and create your own healthy lifestyle.

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. (©2004 Kathleen Brehony. All Rights Reserved.) Columns are archived at [www.fullpotentialliving.com](http://www.fullpotentialliving.com).