

## Your Personal Coach

Kathleen Brehony, Ph.D.

Dear Kathleen,

**Last year – after my stepfather died -- my mother moved from another city to a townhouse just down the street from me. I love having her nearby, and my kids (age 8 and 6) are over the moon about “Nana” living so close. For the most part everything is working out okay, but my mother is quite shy and has not made any friends, and she relies on me for all her socializing. I’m a writer, and between taking care of the kids and running our household, I have managed to carve out just a few mornings a week, while the kids are in school, to work on a book that I am writing. On many of these mornings, Mom will stop over for a cup of coffee and stay until lunchtime. She often calls and asks if I want to go shopping with her. I feel guilty when I say “no,” or when I’m wishing that she would return to her house so I could get back to work. I love her dearly, and don’t want to hurt her feelings, but I’m beginning to resent the fact that I don’t have time to pursue my writing dreams. Advice?**

**-- Janice**

Dear Janice,

It is most likely that your mother is still grieving the loss of her husband. It will also take time for her to adjust to living in a new town without her traditional support systems and friends. She deserves your compassion and your help, but you have no reason to feel guilty because you cannot meet all your mother’s needs for connections and relationships.

Take your mother out to lunch for a heart-to-heart conversation. Tell her just how important your work as a writer is to you, and ask for her support in this. Make certain she understands that the hours you spend pounding away on your computer are a job, just as much as if you were working at an office. In fact, let your other family members and friends know this as well. Your desire to write needs to be honored, and you need the time and space to do your work. Let the people in your life know that – unless it is a true emergency – you will not be answering your phone during your writing time. Make it a point to check your answering machine or voice mail when you take a lunch break, and return calls later, when chatting with a friend won’t interrupt your flow of work.

Let your Mom know just how much you love her, and that you understand that she needs time to adjust to her new life as a widow and a new resident of your town. Offer suggestions and encouragement about ways she can become more involved in your community. Suggest connections and organizations where she might make friends who – unlike you -- have time to linger over morning coffee, or go shopping with her. If she is still grieving – and I expect that she is – suggest that she see a counselor or therapist experienced in bereavement, or join a grief support group. If she is in good health and active, she could benefit socially with a part-time job where she could meet new people. Volunteer work is also a great way to contribute to the community and make new friends in the process. Churches, synagogues, and mosques offer opportunities for fellowship as well as healing. Most communities provide chances to participate in classes, crafts

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groups, and service organizations that satisfy a wide variety of interests and temperaments.

Include your mother in lots of family activities, and when she has made some acquaintances, invite them to some events. But guard your writing time with your life. Take your guilt and throw it out the window. You are responsible only to be a loving daughter, not to take care of your mother's every need for companionship. Making friends is her responsibility, but you may be able to point her in the right direction so that she can get started.

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).