

MAKING MEMORABLE MEMORIES

Thanksgiving was quickly approaching and, as I looked out my window at the changing leaves on the big maple tree that stood stately and colourfully on my front lawn, I wondered what I could do to make the upcoming weekend a special time for my family.

My son Brian was attending Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, and my daughter Cindy was in Fredericton, at the University of New Brunswick. I was looking forward to having them home together, sharing their respective stories of university life. I had been missing the normal “brother-sister” banter that, just a short year before, had been part of our day-to-day routine. My home had become quiet and lonely in their absence, and I looked forward to the renewed energy they would bring on their return for Thanksgiving.

I was a single parent with two teenage children. Whenever family holidays came, there was both a sadness and, at the same time, a forced happiness as we strove to celebrate these occasions. I wanted this dinner to be different – to be positive and memorable.

My thoughts drifted back to a few days earlier, when I bumped into an old friend, who was also divorced and had mentioned that he would be spending the holiday alone, as his son would be at his future in-laws’ for dinner. An idea began to gel in my mind!

I got up off the sofa and picked up the telephone. Calling my children, I asked if they knew of a friend at school that would be alone for the Thanksgiving weekend. I encouraged each of them to extend an invitation for dinner. They said that they would think about it, and I so much hoped they would reach out to someone.

In the meantime, another person came to mind. The daughter of a colleague of mine was in her first year at Dalhousie and could not afford to fly back to her home in Toronto for the long weekend. I called and asked if she would like to join us. She was delighted. Then I picked up the phone again and called my friend Tom. I invited him as well, and he accepted.

As it turned out, and to my delight, both Cindy and Brian stepped up to the plate and had invited a guest. We had our cast of characters!

When the day came, there were seven of us around the table, and dinner was a mix of enjoying the Thanksgiving feast, probing and getting to know new friends, and sharing lots of stories and laughter.

After we finished the main course, my children and their quests were about to move away from the table and “chill out”, while “Mom” cleared the table and got coffee and dessert ready. I had a different plan!

Before they had a chance to move, I asked everyone to raise their empty plates high over their heads and to look at the undersides. To their surprise, they found that a note had been taped to each one.

The notes read: “clear the table”, “load the dishwasher”, “wash the pots and pans”, “make the coffee”, and “set the table for dessert”. Helping was permitted. My children were totally embarrassed in front of their new friends, and protested: “Mom, I don’t believe you did this!” I just sat back and smiled.

It wasn’t long before they all were in action, getting on with their respective chores. The best part was listening to the chatter and laughter that bubbled out from the kitchen.

Many years later, my children, who now have families of their own, still fondly recall that special day of Thanksgiving. We value and treasure the lessons learned about family togetherness, sharing with others, and the joys and benefits of giving and receiving.

After all, isn’t that what Thanksgiving, and life, is all about?

This simple act of kindness and outreach resonated with my struggling family unit, as we learned that we could build new happy memories within uncertain shadows cast by my marriage breakdown.

Sometimes we are overwhelmed by life’s challenges and we need inspiration and support in moving our lives forward toward to a more positive place. As a life coach I realize that we all often accept boundaries that limit our potential, while failing to recognize options and opportunities that could help us to overcome, achieve and even excel.

That Thanksgiving dinner helped me realize that I had been focusing too long on what I didn’t have, and on what wasn’t working in my life. My energy was being drained!

At that point, I began to take steps to search out life coaching and empowerment programs that have helped me recognize the root cause of those negative thoughts, emotions, and feelings. Soon I was dealing with my issues and focusing on what I needed and wanted, for ME. I now enjoy a greater peace, harmony and balance in my life.

You too can benefit from a healthier and more productive, enjoyable and balanced lifestyle.

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