

Thanksgiving is a Set-Up for Relationship Problems

by Lynn Busch Counseling | Nov 23, 2019



Relationship problems seem to get worse at Thanksgiving.

I really believe it's because our concept of Thanksgiving encourages us to have unreasonable expectations.

There is a place in our brains labeled "Thanksgiving." In it, there is a harvest table laden with a golden-brown turkey, steaming casseroles, polished silverware and sparkling crystal glasses. The furniture is gleaming – there is a faint hint of lemon polish competing with all the other delicious smells in the house. Our extended family are all laughing, rosy-cheeked and healthy, the dog is being adorable, and we are all looking forward to spending some "quality time" with each other. The holidays have begun! Oh, the joy and contentment! Ahem.

"Despite this enticing vision of Thanksgiving, reality is what it is. Let's give ourselves a break this year and adjust our expectations."

If you are hosting Thanksgiving dinner, your guests will probably not arrive on time. They will either come early (just as the cat is barfing), or late, making you wonder how to keep the food warm without drying it all out. There will be a sick child somewhere in the group. You will either be aware of this up front, or become aware because ...oh, gosh, some

things are just too awful to write about. Your guests will swoop in and gobble something before they fly out because they have scheduled three appearances today. Or they may bring extra people they didn't tell you about. During all these challenges, your spouse may be vegetating in front of the television watching any number of football games instead of helping you cope. (We all deal with stress differently!) And I haven't even brought up the difficult relatives—you know, your mother who shows extreme favoritism to your brother's children, your uncle who gets drunk and angry, and makes a scene, your sister's children who destroy everything in your house while their parents do nothing.

I could go on, but I am stressing myself out! My advice on how to deal with this reality is to understand that you cannot control other people, and just go with it. I have a friend who tells herself "It's only a problem if I decide it's a problem."

Just accept whatever happens (or doesn't happen) as perfectly normal. It's not a problem, and if it is a problem, it's not your problem.

This year I invite you to join me in being thankful for low expectations. It makes life so much easier – and more enjoyable.

Lynn Busch, MS, LMFT, has been a friend and colleague of mine for over thirty years. Her advice is always on target and consistently hits the mark. (I share this article of hers with you with her permission.) I'd like to thank her for this article and encourage you to share it with anyone whom you think could benefit by it. And, most of all, remember that "thank-fulness" and "gratitude" are the direct opposite of "complaining." Have a happy and joyous Thanksgiving this year! And, of course, call me if you need help setting up Christmas!!

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