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MAKING THE MOST OF EVERY MOMENT EVEN WHEN THINGS ARE TOUGH

We've officially entered the winter months, and that means the days are shorter than any other time of year. Around December and the dawn of the new year, people like to figure out how to make the most of each day. Before you can maximize each day, understand that some things are simply out of our control.

This took me a long time to learn. During my childhood, I never really knew what each day would bring. My dad would be on the road for 2-3 weeks at a time as a traveling salesman. When he would come home for a weekend, martinis and steaks were usually on the menu. Unfortunately, whenever alcohol was introduced to the environment, tempers and fists flared. I tried to control every situation but quickly learned that wasn't possible, so I mastered keeping my head down and my powder dry. I developed a sense of hypervigilance that carried over into adulthood.



I experienced a large learning curve with things I didn't learn throughout my childhood. I had to learn to let things go and stop taking everything and myself so seriously. I also had to learn to not be so cocksure of how life works. An old Western saying goes, "Cockiness is that feeling you have until you're proven wrong," and we will all be proven wrong at some point.

To make the most of each day, we need to realize we are often not in control and find

something we can anchor onto for a higher purpose. Whether it's faith, relationships, or something else, it's imperative you have something to lean on through difficult times.

Even when the worst possible tragedy occurs, remember that every setback can be a setup for a comeback. We can't control the bad, but we can control how we react to it. I used to worry about cases all the time. I would take everything home with me in my head. Ultimately, I realized this didn't benefit me or my clients. Presented with a bad situation, I would try to fix it, but bringing a person back to square one isn't always possible. They're going to have prior visuals or residuals from the traumatic experience that can't be controlled.

People will go through financial hardships and illnesses, and there may not be a clear reason. We all get caught up in hectic day-to-day shenanigans, so we just don't always see the big events coming, and they can catch us by surprise and deliver some shock.

To get the most of each day, I must remember I can't please everyone nor fix everything. What's urgent is not always important, and what's important is not always urgent. Take time for yourself and your loved ones. I've personally set some time aside each day to focus on and be grateful for the most important things in my life — faith, family and relationships — and I have seen benefits.

There is no tried-and-true way to maximize your day. You must experiment and find what works best for you. While doing this, I encourage you to remember not to lose sight of the things we take for granted. Appreciating what we've been given is a great way to make the most of every moment.

- Jim Monast

SPENDING THE HOLIDAYS ALONE?

Boost Your Mood With These Tips

Many Americans spend the holidays alone every year, and the pandemic has only made it more difficult for people to see their loved ones, as travel has become more restricted and strenuous.

If you're one of these people who are spending their first holiday season alone this year, here are a few strategies you can try to make the situation a little easier.

Don't hold yourself to the usual standards.

One of the best things about spending the holidays alone is that you can do things your way. You don't have to worry about meeting everyone else's standards. Instead, you only have to make yourself happy. Simply telling yourself that you are not going to have the usual holiday environment can slightly help, but redefining what the holiday

means to you can remove a huge weight. Trying new things or looking toward the future are great ways to reduce the stress of spending the holidays alone. Keeping up with old traditions may remind you of what you're missing out on, so it can greatly help to create your own traditions.

Plan ahead.

If you know in advance that you're going to be spending the holidays alone, planning ahead can prevent negative feelings. While being spontaneous can sometimes keep things fresh, it could leave you with a feeling of hopelessness about what to do next. There's no need for your list to be extensive or highly detailed, but even just planning to watch a movie or cook some of your favorite dishes can give you something to look forward to.



Take care of yourself.

Just because you're not seeing people during the holidays does not mean you should forgo your basic needs. Stick to your regular hygiene habits and do not let them get away from you. The same goes for eating and sleeping. Staying clean, well-fed, and well-rested goes a long way toward improving your happiness.

As with all mental health advice, what works for some does not work for everyone. Do what you think will work best for you and help you keep your thoughts happy.

Kathy Elson, her husband, Rick, and yours truly!



MEET KATHY ELSON

Our dear friend, Kathy Elson, has been a client for over 20 years. She was born and raised in Amlin, Ohio (much of which was annexed by Dublin a few years ago), and still lives there. She's been married to Rick for 51 years. They raised four girls and are blessed with five grandkids and two great-grandchildren!

A graduate of Hilliard High School, Kathy worked for and was injured at Rage Corporation in Hilliard. Rage manufactures plastic containers and components. She injured her back moving boxes of plastic forms, feeling a pop and displacing a lower lumbar disc. The injury happened on a Sunday. She saw her doctor the next day and has been unable to work since.

Her doctors initially tried physical therapy, water therapy, and pain management. These didn't help the low back pain that radiated down both legs. So, she then underwent an anterior lumbar fusion, which made things worse!

Having always been active raising her family and gardening, she had to limit her normal routine significantly. Rick and the girls help with chores, shopping, and doctor appointments.

During visits with one of her doctors (who has since retired), she met another "famous" Amlin resident: my dad, Joe! Now, my dad (who had also injured his back working a retirement gig at Walmart) "never met a stranger," having been in sales all his life. He was also loud and liked to stir things up, even at his doctor's office visits. (His headstone is inscribed, at his request, with "still running my mouth!") Kathy would always ask about him when we'd talk on the phone or have hearings ... occasionally, she'd share with me some of his antics at the doctor's office.

We recently helped her receive permanent disability benefits, which will help pay the bills.

She has experienced a lot of difficult times since her injury, including losing a daughter recently. But here's the thing: The first thing she does whenever we talk is ask how others are doing! She is one of the kindest souls I've met. She doesn't dwell on the negatives and tries to stay positive through the pains of injury and life. She's just a treat to know, and we are very fond of her.

HOW ONE MINNESOTA TEEN IS HELPING DISABLED ANIMALS



Organizations that help disabled cats and dogs are few and far between. In addition, operations and treatments for any animal can be expensive. A girl from Minnesota saw these obstacles and found a way she can help disabled animals all around the country.

Two years ago, 16-year-old Shaine Kilyun began watching YouTube videos that taught her how to make wheelchairs for disabled cats and dogs. From there, she proceeded through the usual trial and error until she created a design she knew worked the best.

Kilyun does not charge for labor when creating her wheelchairs. Instead, she only charges her clients the cost of materials. This saves her clients over \$700 on average when comparing it to what they would pay from a different organization.

There doesn't seem to be a limit with Kilyun's designs. She has created front-support, full-support, and back-support models that fit each animal's needs. She has made wheelchairs for a

Chihuahua, Great Dane, cats, and even a one-of-a-kind mobility aid for a hedgehog. She plans to create a device to help ducks next.

Kilyun is not just helping people with the ability to pay for her services; she has contacted animal shelters, offering her expertise to help even more animals live comfortably. Many people would avoid adopting disabled dogs, but with Kilyun's creations, the animals become more appealing — and she is giving each of these shelter animals a chance at a happy life.

When discussing the project with Fox 9 in Minneapolis, Kilyun stated, "I just love animals, and I wanted to make a difference somehow. I've saved a few lives, and I hope to save more." Kilyun continues to work hard, and she does not plan on slowing down any time soon.

If you're interested in checking out her designs or need a wheelchair for your furry friend, you can check out Kilyun's projects on Instagram: @wheelies_dogandcat_wheelchairs.

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CREATING A HOLIDAY MASTERPIECE

HOW TO DECORATE YOUR GINGERBREAD HOUSE LIKE A PRO

One of the most popular holiday traditions has become making and decorating gingerbread houses. The tradition began in Germany in the early 1800s and originated from Grimm’s “Hansel and Gretel.” Some shy away from the idea of making their own gingerbread house, but have no fear – if the Germans did it in the early 1800s, so can you!

To simplify things, many gingerbread houses come with baked pieces and a full decorating kit. This helps you have more time for the best part: the actual decorating! Each kit usually comes with fun candy and icing, so you can make something really kick-butt for the holidays!

Icing will be your best friend. Think of it as the yummy glue that holds everything together while also acting as a colorful trim for your gingerbread house. However, because it’ll keep the house from falling, be sure to use a lot!

Spice drops also make for a great trim and “roofing,” just use icing to hold them in place. Alternate between colors or use a variety to make your house really pop.

M&Ms are certainly a must-have for anyone decorating their gingerbread house. Not only are they delicious, but they also make cute little accents all over the house and yard.

Mini cookies of your choice may also make a deliciously good-looking roof. Try layering them up for a dimensional look! And, for extra pizzazz, strategically place mini candy canes throughout the yard and on either side of the front doors and windows.

If you want to get really detailed, try using actual candy bars as fire logs in the fireplace. Just be sure to store your gingerbread house in a cool area so nothing will melt!

Whether you prefer a simple gingerbread house or a flashy one, any and ALL candy can be used! Get decorating and be sure to have a bite of candy along the way!

