

THANKFUL ON THANKSGIVING

SO MANY THINGS TO BE THANKFUL FOR

Great food, a few football games, and the comfort of being surrounded by your family are a few things that make Thanksgiving special. It's easy to forget the spirit of the season when you're eating so much good food and finding various distractions along the way. Thanksgiving is truly a time to reflect on all of life's greatest blessings and be thankful for all we have received.

When I dig deep to understand what I'm thankful for, it always comes back to my family. A few years back, after the boys aged out of Scouting, Amy began reserving a cabin for me and my three sons on Father's Day or my birthday so we could enjoy "guy time" back in the great outdoors. This year, we did something a little different.

My boys reserved a yurt in West Virginia in the Monongahela National Forest. For those that don't know (I didn't), a yurt is a round tent easily portable (if you have your own yak!). We took turns cooking and sat around the campfire swapping lies. We hiked and climbed to the top of a tower where we could look 20 miles in any direction. A memorable part of our trip was exploring an area the locals called Bat Cave. There was no guided tour, and we relied on some backwoods directions to locate it. We had to crawl to get into the cave before it opened up into a huge cavern with a stream. It was pitch-black inside, so flashlights were essential. We did hit a little panic on our way out as it was difficult to find where we came in, but we found it before my son who stayed outside began to worry. He said, "Oh, I was gonna give you a couple hours and then call someone if you hadn't come out." Nice ...

This trip was one to remember. I'm thankful my sons enjoy spending time with the old goat. We have a great time regardless of where we are. Whether we're watching favorite movies, hiking, or discussing deeper life issues, we make each other laugh and enjoy simply being together.

I'm also thankful for my two bonus children and my three grandsons (plus another on the way!) who are an absolute delight to be around. It's hard to believe that the oldest, Oliver, is almost 5 and in preschool. It seems just



yesterday he was cooing like his 6-month-old brother, Oakley. They help me view the world through the eyes of a child, which is something I need to be reminded how to do.

I am also an unabashed believer that America is the greatest country I could live in. Being an American allowed me to grow up in Joplin, Missouri, playing football and basketball. It allowed me to go to college and decide on a career I love. These opportunities were only possible thanks to our veterans and those fighting for our freedom.

We can't forget the things that make our lives more enjoyable like good music and good books. My dad always played records by Johnny Cash or Merle Haggard, and I still enjoy them. My tastes run from John Denver and John Coltrane to Mozart, Jim Brickman, and Led Zeppelin. I've always got my nose in a book and am thankful for the authors that have helped broaden my knowledge or just taken me on a great adventure.

More than most, I am grateful for my clients and the people I work alongside. Work is as enjoyable as you make it, and the people around me for many years have made it a wonderful experience.

As we sit down for our Thanksgiving feast, let's remember the true spirit of the season. There's plenty to be thankful for, even during what feels like the hardest of times.

-Jim Monast

HAVE A LOW-STRESS HOLIDAY

3 Tips for a Merrier Time

The holidays are right around the corner, and while many people can't wait to eat turkey and swap presents, others only see stress on the horizon. Especially for those hosting parties, between decorations, big dinners, excited kids, and visiting family, it can all feel overwhelming. If celebrations are happening at your house this year, here are three tips to lessen the strain and keep up the holiday cheer.

Recharge First

Ensure you're rested and recharged before the holidays by taking time to relax, getting enough sleep, and engaging in activities that make you feel good. When you're rushing to get everything done, it can be tempting to skip self-care routines, but that will cost you in the long run. Your daily

exercise and other health activities keep you balanced and ready to face challenges head-on.

Get Started Early

Holidays always arrive faster than we expect, so begin preparing early. If shopping for presents is a pain point, don't wait until the last minute. Decorate earlier than you need to — or better yet, get the kids to do it for you. There's only so much cooking you can do ahead of time, but ensuring you have all of the equipment and nonperishable ingredients you need a few weeks in advance will reduce both your workload and anxiety.

Don't Expect Perfection

The sooner you let go of the idea of a "perfect" holiday, the sooner you'll be able to have a



happy one. Face it: Something will go wrong. Whether it's an overcooked dish, a child throwing a temper tantrum, or your uncle talking politics at the dinner table, nothing will ever go just how you planned. So, embrace the imperfections.

Whether you're celebrating this year with a group of two or 20, holidays can be a stressful time — but they don't have to be. With these tips, your festivities may not be picture-perfect, but they will be a lot of fun.



CLIENT STORY: MICHELLE HARDWICK

Amy and I recently adopted a rescue dog. We lost our bulldog, Kodi, four years ago and Abbie, the schnauzer we inherited from my dad, about three years ago. After seeing ads from organizations like Stop the Suffering for puppies and adult dogs rescued from horrendous situations, we were hooked. While life is somewhat easier without pets (kind of like when our kiddos finally left the nest), it's next to impossible to resist the soulful eyes and pitiful stories of these dogs who've been abandoned or kept in repulsive conditions. Plus, folks will often buy purebreds from breeders, but these rescues need a home.

For the folks I know who volunteer with animals, their work is really a labor of love.

One of our dear clients is Michelle Hardwick, whom Wilma calls "cutey patootie." She was a volunteer coordinator for 4 Paws for Ability. While not the same as a rescue service, 4 Paws for Ability raises and trains service dogs. As part of her myriad duties, Michelle trained people and dogs, walked the dogs and cleaned up after them.

She had what she thought was a fairly minor injury when she rolled her ankle while walking a dog. By the next day, her ankle and calf were so swollen she couldn't walk. She was put on crutches and in a boot for six weeks, followed by lots of physical therapy.

Her ankle and foot became hypersensitive, especially when exposed to heat and cold. Her foot would change color and become cold to the touch.

After nerve blocks and consultations with several specialists, her doctors determined she had developed reflex sympathetic dystrophy (RSD). RSD is a painful condition that's hard to treat and remarkably debilitating. While

spinal stimulators and pain pumps may reduce symptoms somewhat, the condition often isn't resolved. And claim costs are high as treatment is lifelong.

Michelle ultimately moved to Florida with her family, including her service dog, Zima, as the cold Ohio winters caused her excruciating pain. The warm weather and sunshine seem to help. Understandably, folks with RSD have to learn new ways to cope with the pain that now accompanies everyday life. This can be depressing, but Michelle has always worked hard at remaining upbeat and positive. And she does so with her beloved Zima by her side.

We've represented Michelle for many years. While it's unlikely she'll ever recover enough to return to work, she remains upbeat and celebrates life. Her sunny outlook is infectious! This gal, whom my mom would've said is "no bigger than a minute," has a huge and wonderful heart. Our lives are better for knowing her!

KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON FOR VETERANS DURING A HURRICANE



New Orleans is no stranger to fighting off large-scale storms. The city has continued to prove its resilience after hurricanes like Katrina, Laura, and Delta. These storms cause unimaginable damage and often leave Louisiana residents without power for weeks on end. A newer property in New Orleans that houses low-income veterans came up with a solution to prevent their residents' power from going out.

St. Peter Residential was designed to be Louisiana's first net-zero emissions apartment complex. This essentially means that the building removes or offsets as much power as what's generated on-site. The complex was built with an eight-hour solar battery and a microgrid of 450 solar panels that produce electricity on demand. Any excess power is then stored in the battery, which is in the parking lot.

Hurricane Ida is the third storm that St. Peter Residential has endured. The surrounding areas had their power knocked out by all three storms, but

St. Peter kept theirs through the bulk of the storms. In addition to helping keep power during storms, the solar grid also provides cost relief from high electricity bills. On a clear, blue-sky day, the power generated from the solar panels helps run the building. It's not a perfect system, as occasional cloud cover can knock the power from the building.

St. Peter houses 50 units, half of which are reserved for veterans, and another 21 are market-rate to help support low-income families and veterans. Besides the units, St. Peter also contains a wellness center for yoga and meditation and common areas and outdoor spaces.

Since Hurricane Katrina hit, the St. Bernard Project, which is responsible for the construction and funding of St. Peter, has helped rebuild homes for over 2,000 families. St. Peter is just the most recent accolade for the organization that has helped so many affected by storms in Louisiana.

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ANSWER

NIBBLES WITH NUG



ROASTED TURKEY

Inspired by TheKitchn.com.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 whole turkey, thawed
- 2 cups chicken or vegetable broth
- Salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 450 F.
2. Remove packaging and giblets from inside of the turkey.
3. Place the turkey in a broiling pan breast-side up and rub it with salt and pepper. Pour the broth around the turkey.
4. Place the pan in the oven and turn the temperature down to 350 F. Turkey should cook for 12-15 minutes per pound, typically 3-4 hours.
5. Remove the turkey from the oven every 45 minutes and baste it with the broth.
6. Once finished, let the turkey rest for 15-20 minutes before carving and serving.

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OVERCOMING THE IMPOSSIBLE TASK

IMPROVING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH ONE STEP AT A TIME

Almost everyone at some point has encountered a task that is seemingly simple, but no matter what they do, they can't complete it. These tasks can be as straightforward as making the bed or something bigger, like cleaning an entire room. For many, this is an obstacle that they may want to do but can't, which weighs heavily on them and becomes detrimental to their mental health.

It's important to understand that the impossible task is not a sign of laziness; depression and anxiety can make any task feel much bigger and more difficult than it actually is. If you find yourself unable to do the things you need or want to do, try these techniques to help overcome your obstacles.

Break up the task.

When the overarching task feels daunting, breaking it up into smaller segments can help you manage it. If you're cleaning the kitchen, clean for only a few minutes at a time before taking a break. It might take longer, but the space will be clean at the end of the day.



Make the task more enjoyable.

Play music or involve your pet in some way to make the task fun or create a reward system for yourself. For example, tidying a specific area of the house or folding a basket of laundry may earn you time to play video games or watch TV. Alternating tasks and rewards is a great way to overcome any task, big or small.

It can help to consider why the task feels so impossible, especially if you used to enjoy it. Try to remember what made it enjoyable and see if you can return to that state of mind. If the objective is not so urgent, determine its importance and if the task can be saved for another day.

When all else fails, you can always ask someone for support or even pay someone else to do the task for you. No matter what you decide, there are ways to defeat the impossible task.