
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

I know everyone is happy to have a short week, with Thanksgiving giving most of us two days off. Of course, if you will be cooking and baking for the holiday feast, you will be hard at work anyway. I don't know about you, but I'm looking forward to eating too much, sleeping too much and then eating some more. Then it will be back to exercise boot camp!

Show me a family function and I'll show you a family dysfunction. I subscribe to the notion that ALL families are dysfunctional in some way but we just have to love one another anyway. We always seem to have the expectation that everything will be perfect. And of course, it never is – the dressing is too salty, or there's not enough salt, sometimes the turkey isn't cooked all the way, the sweet potato soufflé flopped, Uncle Henry drank a little too much champagne... The important thing is that we all lighten up, not take things too seriously and enjoy our time together. Family time is too precious and that is when we are making memories for our families. How we react to the raw turkey is more important than the huge, delicious turkey itself.

I often think about people who are away from their families during the holidays, or who don't have a family gathering to go to. People who are in the hospital, our kids who are not going home, adults in prison, our soldiers who are far away. Sometimes people just can't find a way to travel to be with their families. I always remember the acts of kindness by friends who extended invitations to me to join their families, on more than one occasion. When I was young and in my first job after school, I just couldn't make the trip home for Thanksgiving, so I went to work at the prison. A co-worker heard that I was alone for the holiday and invited me to join their family. God bless those families who take in the strays.

If you know people who can't make it to their own family gathering, I would encourage you to bring in those strays – if you dare to expose them to your own family, with the appropriate warnings, of course. ☺

Sometimes we are the only family that our kids will see during the holiday season. (Or ever.) OJJ staff are some of the most compassionate people I've ever worked with, and I know that those of you who will be spending Thanksgiving at work at one of the facilities will do everything you can to make sure our kids have a good experience. You will make sure the kids have a nice Thanksgiving meal, and get to phone home to speak with their families so they won't feel so alone. Even though you will spend holiday away from home and family, you will be making a holiday for our kids, and I want you to know I appreciate that.

Speaking of giving, central office staff held a send-off celebration for our orderly, Hollywood Richardson, whose last day with us was last Friday. He will enter a halfway house and start life over as a free man. He spoke briefly about second chances, and that, of course, is what OJJ is all about. To help Hollywood make a fresh start, we raised and deposited to his account \$1,160. I am so thankful to work alongside co-workers who exhibit such generosity.

I have a lot to be thankful for – a great family, terrific people to work with, and a mission that has real meaning. Wishing each of you a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday, wherever and with whomever you spend it. Thanks for all you do, every day, day in and day out, to meet the mission. May God bless you all, and be safe!

Sincerely,

“Doc” *Dr. Mary Livers*

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