

Aunt Bossy

Written by Susan Murphy

Monday, 30 October 2017 14:50 - Last Updated Tuesday, 31 October 2017 19:44



Happy Holidays?

Dear Aunt Bossy,

The holidays are headed our way, and I'm not happy about it. I hate the pressure to be happy, cook specific things, buy presents and decorate. What do you recommend?

Scrooge

Dear Scrooge,

Oh, puleeze! Stop it.

No one says you have to celebrate anything, and if they do, you can ignore them. You didn't outline your circumstances, and, if you have children, my advice will be different, but in the meantime, start planning your avoidance.

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Do not go shopping anywhere. Order groceries online. Get out of town to a remote cabin somewhere if possible. Don't feel you have to accept any invitations. Don't watch anything on a screen that you haven't pre-selected. Let everyone know you will not be on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or the phone until after January 1st. Stick to it.

If you have children, you should ignore your feelings, and plan a simple celebration where the emphasis is on doing things together, like baking cookies and making presents. If you are religious, the emphasis should be on those rituals. It isn't fair to deprive your kids of what most people find a lovely time of year just because you don't appreciate it.

As for you, most of us get it. We have all felt like that, at least a tiny bit, at one time or another. It does get overpowering. Re-think your phobia.

Wouldn't it be nice to get together with a FEW people with whom you can really relax and laugh without any worry about what you feed them or what your house looks like? Wouldn't it be fun to serve tacos or wonton soup? Wouldn't it be interesting to volunteer to provide services to people who aren't lucky enough to have the luxury of deciding what to do or not do during the holidays? Wouldn't it be great to go on vacation somewhere completely different? Wouldn't it feel terrific to just go to the movies a lot? (I once went on Christmas day wearing my pajamas under my coat.)

Don't make a big deal out of conforming or not conforming. My husband and I no longer feel obligated to find presents for each other. If something strikes us, we get it. If not, no problem. Sometimes we put up a tree. Sometimes we put up a tree with ornaments, and sometimes we just put up some ornaments. No one cares, except this year we will have to do it for the cat.

Most other people don't really care what you do, unless, of course, you do have children who desperately care. Your friends, family, and neighbors might have opinions about it, but that is not your problem. Do what you feel like, and if you change your mind mid-holiday season, go for it.

The important thing here is for you to take a look at WHY you feel this way. Are you exhausted? Sick of materialism which has become joined at the hip with holidays? Lazy? Unconnected to people you want to be with? It doesn't matter which it is, but you should know why for your

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own sake. That way, you can decide what to do, if anything.

As my mother used to say, "Hairy, Merry."

Have fun whatever you decide.

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Freaked Out Father

Dear Aunt Bossy,

I am a single father with two boys, ten and twelve. What do I tell them about this Harvey Weinstein situation?

Ron

Dear Ron,

If you raise them properly, you won't have to tell them much.

You know the drill: show them respect for all people, show them what good manners look like, show them how to pay close attention to others so they rarely mistake the other person's intentions (in other words, just because the girl is friendly and has on shorts does not mean she wants to get physical). Show them values that reject cheap thrills, over the top materialism and

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the rejection of those who are different from them. Emphasize gratitude. (So much bad behavior is born of lack of gratitude for what one has.) Show them how to show appreciation for others without being tacky. Show, show, show.

Talk is cheap. Just like Harvey.

Disclaimer: I did NOT just say that you don't have to talk about it. If that is how you read this, re-read.

Aunt Bossy is Susan Murphy, an internationally known Communication Skills Coach who adores spending every winter and spring in Beaufort. Ask for advice at bossymurph@mac.com

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