

E-Letter for Optimal Living

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Counting Blessings

In the spirit of Thanksgiving, I want to thank all my readers for taking the time to read my e-letter. With so much mail coming at you everyday, I am honored you take the time to read mine! It is my hope that it will educate, inspire, and motivate the fire within you.

What are you thankful for this year? Sure, we can think about all the things we are not happy about, so let's count our blessings for a moment. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and just be thankful. If nothing else, you can be thankful for that breath you just took. Without it, you wouldn't be here!

Having an attitude of gratitude can make or break a day, can't it? One of my favorite books is [Simple Abundance: A Daybook of Comfort and Joy](#) by Sarah Ban Breathnach. She takes each day and writes about one thing to be thankful for. If you are looking for a fresh outlook on the blessings of daily life, this book is a gem.

Taking Back the Holidays

I've been thinking about how the holidays have changed since I was a child. For starters, we didn't start decorating until well after Thanksgiving. Now it seems that red and green items start appearing in the stores in August! What I notice most is that the word "Christmas" has become synonymous with "shopping. Does this sound familiar? Person 1: "Ready for Christmas?" Person 2: "No! I still have 4 people to shop for!" or "Yes! All my shopping is done! And now that the economy is tight, we hear "Will you be shopping less this Christmas?" So...why is shopping the main focus of Christmas?

When I was growing up, we had 5 children in our home (plus 3 already married.) We would get Christmas gifts such as slippers, bath beads, hairbrushes, pajamas, candy canes, cards, and then one big present, like a toy or a doll. Then there were always gag gifts or and what Elaine on Seinfeld would call "re-gifts" (recycled gifts.) It was wonderful, magical and beyond our wildest dreams! We also had rituals, like caroling on Christmas Eve, dressing up and re-enacting the birth of Jesus, going to Midnight Mass and coming home for oyster stew by candlelight, rising early to open presents, having a huge feast with lots of relatives, playing cards, ice skating, sledding, and visiting all day long. The gifts were great, but the main part was having people over to celebrate the event, which in this case was the birth of Jesus. And now, the opposite has happened. Shopping has taken over as the main event and talking about Jesus is considered politically incorrect!

If you are like me, and feel the holidays have lost their perspective, think about what you can do to reclaim them. I am blessed to have a family that still focuses on being together to celebrate "the reason for the season" and engages in rather creative gift-giving. We still give used gifts, such as books we have already read, "digs" we find at rummage sales, acts of service to the needy or each other, donations to charities, homemade cards, and sometimes we consider just spending time together as "the big gift." And if we choose to give nothing, that is cool, too.

What about you? If you could reclaim the holidays to be less shopping-oriented, what would you do?

And now that you have stated that, do you realize that you can have what you declared? Yes, you can. It is now yours to make it happen. All you have to do is design a plan of action. If you need help, email me at bev@mycoachbev.com for a free email consult on reclaiming the holidays, and I will get you started!

Pomegranate: The Holiday Jewel

If you have not discovered this popular pinkish-red fruit, this year, now is the time. It is in season and that means two things: the price is right and it is delicious! This luxury with its juicy and nutritious seeds is one of my all-time favorites. If you want to spruce up your Thanksgiving or Christmas table, add pomegranate seeds to salads or desserts. It will add the look of royalty!

Don't let the strange look of the fresh pomegranate intimidate you. Slice it down the middle, and you will be welcomed by hundreds of beautiful red jewels peeking out at you through little white caves, which by the way are also edible. You can scoop the seeds into a bowl, or use the technique of my older sister Bea. She likes to pluck each seed out one by one and savor each one, which tends to be my preference, as well, since they do lend themselves to succulent savoring. Have I made your mouth water? If so, indulge yourself and enjoy the fact that one gigantic pomegranate has no fat, no sodium, is high in potassium and Vitamin C and supplies only 100 calories and can entertain you for hours. Compare that to a 30-chip bag of Doritos that leaves you with 250 calories, 13 grams of fat, and possibly a desire for more of the same!

How to pick a good pomegranate? Select one that is plump, round, and heavy. You can store uncut fruit in the fridge for up to 2 months. **Other uses:** add to salads or blend into smoothies or juices. Pomegranate juice is also popular sold as a healthy beverage. Just keep an eye on the label to watch for sugar content! One 8 oz. serving of juice can give you 150 calories and 18 grams (3 tsp.) of sugar.

Holiday Eating Tip: Eat All You Want

I have been writing articles and giving talks on healthy holiday eating for over 20 years, and I have come to the conclusion that while people think this topic is important, they also find it unappealing, and most people do their own thing anyway. No one wants a dietitian raining on their Thanksgiving parade or Christmas feast.

So to make everyone happy, I will skip right over any recommendations to say, eat and drink all you want, because frankly, that is what you will probably do anyway. Whoa, did I just stop you in your tracks? Am I not acting like a good dietitian should? Were you REALLY looking for some guidance? Okay, let's do it my way and have a mini-coaching session and work out an action plan. When you think about holiday eating this year, what ONE thing (eating or exercise in mind) do you want to do differently this year? Now, what will it take for that ONE thing to happen? Let's go on....

1. What, if anything, could possibly get in your way?
2. How will you deal that barrier?
3. What is your confidence level on a scale of 1 to 10, ten being highest?
4. What, if anything, do you need to tweak about your goal to make it more achievable?

Now it's time to declare your intention:

I, _____ declare that this holiday season,

I am going to _____ and

_____ is how I am going to do it.

When _____ gets in my way,

I am going to do _____.

My level of confidence on a scale of 1-10 is _____

and if after a week, I am not doing so well,

I will enlist the help of _____.

I may even consider contacting bev@mycoachbev.com for a free consultation on how a life and wellness coach can help me get my eating under control and my fitness goals back on track!

Coaching – Why it's Hot!

Did you know that there are approximately 30,000 coaches worldwide? That is according to the International Coach Federation's latest Global Study. Coaching is hot! And here's why: coaching helps people focus on what matters most to them in life: business and personal. In the business world there are many changes taking place: job transition, self-employment, creation of small businesses, downsizing, restructuring, mergers, shortage of talented employees, job insecurity, and increased workplace pressures. In their personal lives, people face issues of life transition and balance, stress, health, finances, family relationships, etc.

The ICF's definition of coaching is "...partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. Coaches are trained to listen, to observe and to customize their approach to individual client needs. They seek to elicit solutions and strategies from the client; they believe the client is naturally creative and resourceful. The coach's job is to provide support to enhance the skills, resources, and creativity that the client already has."

If you are ready to move forward in your life and would like the services of a professional coach, please give me a call email me at bev@mycoachbev.com. I'd be happy to give you a free consultation!

Coaching telegroups coming in January

(Dates TBA)

My Wellness Journey

(for adults or teens)

Decluttering the SHED Way

(Separate Treasures, Heave Trash, Embrace your Identity, Drive Forward)

Mid-Life, Best Life

The Power of Positive Thanking

My parting words before this Thanksgiving of 2008 are from an article, "The Power of Positive Thanking" by Marianne Williamson. This article touched me because it expressed the need to be grateful for not just for the good things in life, but also for the not-so-good. That is the true test of gratitude. She writes: "Very often, I say 'Thank you, God!' when a gift in my life is packed in silk and satin and wrapped beautifully in ribbons and bows. But just as often, I say thank you when the gift has been wrapped in heartache. Thank you, because I'm determined to see the lesson. Thank you, because I know there's a gift here, even if I cannot yet see it. I have seen that every devastating loss, there comes at last – because of what I learn- a stunning win of some kind. And when that win arrives, it is more than wrapped in ribbons and bows: It is accompanied by shooting stars. And then I do not shout, "Thank you, God, "I whisper it. My gratitude reverberates softly through my entire being. I know I have touched a nerve, not only in men but in the universe itself, and I feel in those moments that life is grateful to me as well. Gratitude lies at the heart of the universe, and I want it at the heart of me." – Marianne Williamson

So grateful for all of you,

Bev

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Bev Benda, LRD, Life and Wellness Coach