

A Healthy Dose of Community and Family

I am so thankful to be from a large family of eight children. I may not have always appreciated sharing a room growing up or the other responsibilities, but today I can say that I am truly blessed. When my parents, siblings, nieces, nephews, or other relatives need something- the need barely leaves their lips until help is on the way. My cousin is just now calling in this morning for his daily 7:30 am chat with my dad.

It is hard to imagine that others do not have it this way. I have clients with nobody to give them rides to the doctor or merely a friendly phone call to check in. Car problems sometimes cause them to lose a job or to become totally stranded. Some even have difficulty getting to a church food distribution. I recently took a lady shopping who had been on the floor three days in a high rise apartment before she was discovered after a fall.

When I lived in Virginia my family was not nearby, but I had friends and a church family. Today one of my sisters lives out of state, but she too has friends, an immediate family, a few relatives, and can depend on a church community plus some other caring communities.

I have great compassion for those in need and sometimes must purposely avoid exhaustion. I do sometimes get frustrated though. It does not always have to be this way. Some of these individuals have failed to understand the importance of community and have not created these relationships before dire circumstances have hit. In other situations they have reached out only to find rejection in one or two places and they have looked no further.

It is critical that we teach others the importance of community. It is dangerous to their health and well- being to depend on only self or any one individual. I am constantly teaching this concept and providing opportunities for clients to expand their circles. It is so needless for someone to fall and not be found for a few days or others to be alone.

Just as an annual doctor's visit is recommended, the holiday provides a perfect time for a "community check up." If you are spending this year alone, how can you be intentional about joining a community within the next year? Who do you need to contact? Who do you need to forgive? How can you expand your circle? Who can become a part of your phone tree? Communities need not be formal organizations, but can be even a tiny group of caring individuals.

As we enter this thanksgiving season it is a reminder of the importance of community and not taking those in our circles for granted. Maybe it is a reminder to strengthen those bonds. It may also be a time to add a few chairs to the table and invite in a lonely neighbor or college student. Some need our friendship even more than they need a turkey dinner. Happy Thanksgiving!