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Thanksgiving is observed each year in the United States on the fourth Thursday in November. This year, Thanksgiving is celebrated on Nov. 22 in remembrance of the Pilgrims who left England to escape religious persecution and in order to give thanks for their bounty and good fortunes once they settled in America.

It is indeed important to give thanks for abundance and the quality of life that each one of us enjoys. Just like the Pilgrims, we, too, have so much to be thankful for – religious freedom, shelter, family, friends, food and more. But Thanksgiving is also a time when emotional unrest is on the rise and an over indulgence of food is an absolute certainty.

There is a tendency to overeat this time of year. But take your time and enjoy each bite of food. Chew slowly just in case you want to return for seconds or possibly thirds. Consider putting smaller potions on your plate to avoid feeling so tired and bloated afterward. If you're going to visit family and friends, remember it's okay to say "no thanks," or better yet just take it home with you to enjoy the next day.

If you're concerned about your health, be mindful of the type of food you consume and the potential increase in calories. Eating patterns generally change during this time of year. So don't throw their diet out the window. Remember, if you're detouring from your normal diet, your body will defend itself from foods that you have not eaten lately or before.

Also, if you're going to transport food this holiday season, you have a two-hour window before spoilage occurs. So keep food items cool and stored properly to prevent bacteria from spreading, because no one wants to end their holiday celebration with food poisoning. Be safe and always sanitary if you're going to handle and transport food.

Although Thanksgiving is celebrated with food and the fellowship of family and friends, I can't help but think about the countless people whose unfortunate circumstances often cause them to drink incessantly in order to numb the pain of neglect and loneliness.

You may know someone who turns up the bottle to avoid dealing with the vicissitudes of life. I certainly know some people, and many of them intoxicate themselves to try to drown out their sorrows. Dealing with sorrow is not easy, but dealing with the lost of a loved one is overwhelming. I've lost family members and close personal friends, but the emotional strain sometimes resurfaces around the holidays, on birthdays and during special events.

If I'm not being too presumptuous, I believe memories can be cherished. You'd either laugh or cry. But in either case, they're special and unique to each individual. The recollections could bring you joy or cause someone else great distress.

Life is what you make of it. Either you're stuck in a rut or you're trying to avoid the rut to make it to the next level – as long as you're moving forward. These stress factors must be removed from around us so that we want to enjoy our lives. I'll admit that it's difficult to do when the holiday rolls around. But know that you're not alone during this time of year.

Sometimes you have to look within. All problems are not earthshaking. Some can be avoided;

some require a little discipline on your end. For example, it is within your power to eat healthy and not overeat. There is a price to pay if your will power wanes, leaving you susceptible to bouts of gluttony.

Make the adjustments. Don't succumb to the holiday blues. Take note of your life physically, nutritionally, emotionally and spiritually. The Pilgrims had much more to worry about than you, I suppose. So celebrate what you do have -- even if it's not much -- and don't worry about what you don't have.

I'm just thankful that I'm able to assist individuals with their diet and lifestyle. So every day to me is Thanksgiving, just knowing that I've touched someone's life for the better.

Happy Thanksgiving!

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