



## Traditions That Keep Us Together Through Technology and Quality Time

The holiday season is all about coming together with your loved ones to celebrate and connect. Everyone has their own holiday traditions or ways to stay connected with their family; some gather together and cook up a delicious meal, some travel to annual vacation spots, and others dedicate the day to watching the big game. Whatever it may be, nothing beats creating memories that will last a lifetime.

We have a variety of long-distance relatives whom we try to stay connected with. My parents bounce back and forth between Minnesota and Florida, and they have their own place near us, which is great. When they're in Florida, we always try to do a Sunday night phone call with the kids just so they can maintain that strong relationship with their grandparents.

When they're in town visiting during the summer or holiday season, we like to do a Sunday night dinner. I always enjoy those; even if my parents aren't here, we continue that little tradition in our household. It's the one night a week we can all sit together and enjoy each other's company.

Nowadays, an easy way for us to all stay connected is our family group text chat that includes me, my wife, my parents, my brother

and his wife, and my aunt! It's just a big long text chain where we can check in on one another. We've had it for about a year now, and it's been going pretty strong since.

We don't text all day, every day, but it's definitely a few texts throughout the week. When we have birthdays or celebration plans, it's nice to have a platform where we can get in touch with each other quickly with everybody all at once.

We'll send pictures and let everyone know what the kids and even the dogs are up to, but it can be tricky when you forget who's in the chat. There was a time around Christmas when somebody accidentally revealed a present in the conversation!

We may have to start making separate little group chats just to be sure no one spoils any surprises. And the person we thought would be the one to spoil a surprise was definitely right — it was kind of like a self-fulfilling prophecy, which was too funny.

Last year, we did spring break in Florida, and everyone came down, and it was just a nice little family vacation with everybody. It had been the first time we all got back together since COVID hit, and we may continue that tradition of coming together in one spot during the spring.

Just before COVID shut down the world, my brother and I traveled to England with my wife and his wife (technically still his fiancée at that point) for a long weekend. We visited London, and we were all able to stroll along the Thames River to Fulham's stadium for a game, a stadium we've been to a few times on our prior trips to London.

My brother and I have always been close, and as I watch my kids get older and get more into their activities, I hope they'll follow in our footsteps and create their own ways of staying connected. I don't know what kind of technology we'll have in 20 years, but whatever it is, staying connected with the whole family will still be important.

*- Andrew M. Ayers*



# Why Do I Constantly Think About This?

## *How to Manage Intrusive Thoughts*

Many people deal with unwelcome, intrusive thoughts every day. We've all experienced unwanted images or notions racing through our minds, and it can be difficult to concentrate on what we need to be doing. These thoughts can also trigger feelings of anxiety, worry, and shame. But know you're not alone — some estimate that 6 million Americans are affected, so many can empathize with what you're going through. Here is some good advice about intrusive thoughts and how to manage them in a healthy way.

### **What are intrusive thoughts?**

Intrusive thoughts are unwanted ideas that occur without warning at any time, often triggered by stress or anxiety, or even short-term biological factors, like hormone shifts. They can come in many forms, and people often worry about what they mean, so naturally, they try to control or stop the ideas altogether. But trying to prohibit these thoughts can make them more persistent.

### **What can you do?**

Instead of pushing these thoughts out of your mind, acknowledge that they are intrusive concepts and allow them to linger.

Understand they will pass, but prepare yourself for other unwanted thoughts. Most importantly, push through and continue to complete your tasks and errands when the thoughts occur.

If you try to control, suppress, question, act, or engage with intrusive thoughts, you'll likely be even more fixated on them. You'll feel more in control if you allow them to pass through your brain instead of trying to avoid and ignore them.



Intrusive thoughts can feel distressing, but allowing them to freely enter and exit your mind will provide you with ease — even if it doesn't seem that way. However, if intrusive ideas persist and continually impair your ability to work or do things you enjoy, seek information from a mental health professional. You're never alone in your struggles, so don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it.



Nicholas Bostic had a heated argument with his girlfriend one night, so he went out driving around to clear his head and relax. Little did he know he would become a hero that same night. During his drive, he witnessed a raging fire that had engulfed a family's home.

Bostic stopped his car and ran inside despite the flames. He immediately began yelling for anyone since no one appeared to be inside the house — not even emergency personnel. His cries woke up 18-year-old Seionna Barrett, the oldest of five children, and she gathered her siblings together to exit the home. Bostic ran to Barrett and her young siblings, and he helped her take the children outside. But Barrett then told Bostic that her 6-year-old sister wasn't with them. Without a second thought, Bostic again entered the home, hoping to rescue the little girl.

## **Right Place, Right Time**

### **Late-Night Driver Becomes a Sudden Hero**

The fire continued to spread quickly, and Bostic described it as a "black lagoon" of smoke on the ground floor. He checked all of the bedrooms but couldn't find the little girl. Then, as he approached a window to exit the home, he heard a child's cry. Bostic then had an internal conversation with himself: He knew the child needed help, and although he was terrified to go back downstairs through the fire and smoke, he wouldn't quit. After wrapping his shirt around his mouth, he ran through the home, following the girl's cries for help. Once he found her, he picked her up, ran upstairs, and jumped out the window onto the lawn.

All of the children were safe and suffered no injuries. Bostic received first-degree burns and severe cuts on his arm. He was airlifted to the nearest hospital once first responders arrived at the scene. Bostic's cousin created a GoFundMe to pay for Bostic's medical bills, and it collected \$556,000.

Today, Bostic is healthy and healing. He now has a new perspective on life and is looking forward to whatever his future might hold.

# TAKE A **BREAK**



## APPLE CRANBERRY CRISP

### Ingredients

- 3 cups peeled and chopped tart apples
- 1 1/2 cups cranberries
- 3/4 cup packed brown sugar, divided
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup butter, cold
- Vanilla ice cream (optional)

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375 F.
2. In a large bowl, combine apples, cranberries, 1/4 cup brown sugar, lemon juice, and cinnamon.
3. Grease an 8-inch baking dish and pour the mixture into it.
4. In a small bowl, mix flour and the remaining brown sugar. Cut in cold butter until the mixture is crumbly. Sprinkle this over the fruit.
5. Bake uncovered for 25–30 minutes or until the topping is golden brown and the filling is bubbly. If desired, serve with vanilla ice cream and enjoy!

Inspired by [TasteOfHome.com](http://TasteOfHome.com)

# I WANT MY MONEY BACK!

## Recent Graduate Sues Her College

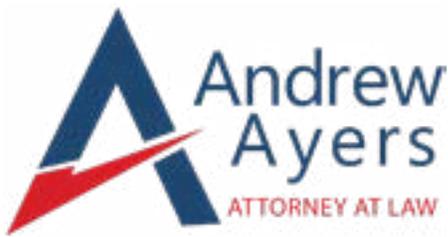
College graduates are eager to get into the workforce and start using their newly acquired knowledge in the “real world.” However, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, only 20% of U.S. college students in 2009 had a job after they graduated. In 2009, Trina Thompson found herself in that 80% of unemployed graduates, and she wanted to do something about it.

After graduating from Monroe College in New York, Thompson couldn’t find a suitable job. So she filed a \$70,000 case against her school (the amount of her tuition for her bachelor’s degree) and \$2,000 to compensate her for what she endured while searching for a job. In her lawsuit, she claimed that the college’s career counselors promised career advice and job leads but didn’t work hard enough to find her a job. In addition, she suggested that Monroe’s Office of Career Advancement shows preferential treatment to students with high GPAs — not students like herself who had a low GPA.

In response to the case, Monroe College spokesman Gary Axelbank said, “The lawsuit is completely without merit. While it’s clear that no college, especially in this economy, can guarantee employment, Monroe College remains committed to working with all its students ... to prepare them for careers and to support them during their job search.”

But Thompson or the college didn’t have to worry about attending trial because the case didn’t make it that far. Her case might have stood up in court *if* she hadn’t received a job offer. Her media attention and IT degree caught the eye of Steve Bellamy, CEO of The Ski Channel. He loved her hunger and willingness to put herself out there, and he offered her a position at his company. Thompson got the job, so her case was eventually dissolved.





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## Thanksgiving Is About More Than Food

### *It's About Showing Gratitude*

As we prepare for our Thanksgiving feasts, Thursday night football games, and Black Friday shopping, take some time to show gratitude for those around you and for what you have. Here are a few ways to practice gratitude this month.

#### **Appreciate everything.**

Get into the habit of being grateful for the little things in your life. It can be easy to acknowledge the "big" things, but nothing is too small to be thankful for. You can be grateful the weather is nice and sunny, that you received the package you've been waiting for, or that you got out of bed today. Don't leave out anything when practicing gratitude.

#### **Practice mindfulness.**

Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present and aware of what's happening around you. So, instead of being overwhelmed by what you need to do tomorrow or next week, focus on the present moment and enjoy the time you spend solo or with your loved ones. Live in the moment and take one day at a time. Tomorrow will surely come, and you only have a limited amount of time in the present.

#### **Celebrate your challenges.**

Sometimes struggles and battles in our lives can weigh us down. But when you persevere and continue to push forward, you will find success. Challenges help you improve your abilities and resilience,



so celebrate the progress you've made. Showing gratitude for challenges and negative experiences allows us to acknowledge humility and appreciate growth in our lives.

#### **Keep a journal.**

Writing down the things you're grateful for will remind you of all the great things you have when other things aren't going so well. So, keep a journal about what you're grateful for each day or week — even if it's just small things at first. Your perspective on life will change, and it will get easier to see the good things and to feel grateful for things you were likely overlooking.

Showing gratitude is something we should do every day, all throughout the year — not just during the holidays. So, try to practice mindfulness and gratitude using these tips! Happy Thanksgiving, everyone!