

# Stuffing Is For Turkeys, Not People

Thanksgiving.

I can smell the turkey cooking, can't you? Thanksgiving holiday was always very special at my grandparents house. Grandma Eplin was a fabulous cook. An off the charts home-cooking chef. She could make anything taste out of this world. Her homemade cinnamon rolls were legendary in our family. I loved it when my mother was going to have a baby because that meant Grandma Eplin was coming to cook!

I remember watching my grandmother preparing the turkey for cooking. She washed it. Then she took some bread cubes, celery, other veggies and spices and stuffed it right inside of the dead bird. Of course, most of us know what stuffing is. The stuffing cooked inside the turkey. When fully cooked and smelling wonderful, the stuffing was removed from the belly of the bird, soaked with gravy and giblets and happily consumed by our hungry family. Stuffing tasted really good.

**Thanksgiving wouldn't be the same without turkey and stuffing.**

But what if people were turkeys? (Some people are if you know what I mean!). Would we stuff them? That is a not so pleasant a thought. Actually, pretty disgusting.

**Of course people are not meant to be stuffed. But there are people in life who stuff themselves. Not with food or drink. But with feelings. Emotional stuffers abound in our increasingly dysfunctional society.**

Stuffing is good for turkeys, but not for you and me.

## Confessions Of A Stuffer

I know all about stuffing feelings. Steve Roll stuffed anger and other stuff for years. I was good at it too. I was a professional at stuffing my true feelings. For sure, my anger exploded to the surface from time to time. But when my emotions erupted, I was extremely efficient at batting my feelings down and pushing my escaping emotions back into my heart.

But emotional stuffing has a lifespan. Somewhere, some time, some how stuffing catches up to stuffers. At age thirty-seven, I experienced a major personal life crisis. The crisis crippled me emotionally and spiraled me into an emotional free fall of depression that nearly took my life.

The anger that I had stuffed for three decades came blowing out. I came to grips with stuffing of anger issues as I sat alone in a hospital room being treated for depression. Depression is anger turned inward. I was deeply depressed. I realized that anger that I had suppressed for over thirty years had triggered depression. All kinds of dark, scary ugly emotions poured out of my heart. The stuffed emotions would no longer remain stuffed. They exploded and left me in a state of depletion and dysfunction.

I thank God for the Christian counselors who helped me unstuff my heart. They told me it was okay to let my feelings go. I needed to release decades of unresolved emotional pain and feelings that I had not faced in a positive manner. My folks divorce when I was six years old propelled me on a course of anger. I was angry because I felt abandoned and rejected.

The breaking up of our family unit hurt deeply. I had no way of expressing how I felt. So I did what a six year old could do...stuff it. And I stuffed it again during adolescence, and adulthood. Even after I became a Christian at age twenty, I kept stuffing what hurt.

God was gracious and merciful to take me, over time, through a restoration process that healed, restored and renewed my spiritual and emotional life. Step by painful step, the Lord held my hand, healed me with His Word (Psalm 107:20, Jeremiah 30:17), comforted and strengthened me through the Holy Spirit, and showed me that stuffing my feelings is not His will for my life.

## **Stuffing is Common**

A lady who was seeking restoration counseling announced to me that she was an emotional stuffer. She said “I stuff my feelings and I am very good at it”. I asked her how life was going, and she said not so well. No kidding! Stuffers miss so much of the good stuff that life is made of. Stuffed hearts have no room for life and the joy of living!

*Here are some common reasons why people stuff emotions and suppress feelings.*

- Stuffers grew up in homes where expressing emotions was unacceptable.
- Stuffers learned to stuff emotions by watching a parent stuff theirs.
- Stuffers were controlled by someone and feared sharing their feelings.
- Stuffer’s low self-esteem prevented them from feeling that their emotions were important and worth sharing.
- Stuffers suppress instead of express feeling because stuffing seems to be a safe place.
- Stuffers are afraid of facing their feelings and dealing with negative emotions.
- Stuffers have not been taught how to deal with their emotions in a healthy manner.

- Stuffing is an emotional defense mechanism that becomes comfortable.
- Stuffing is the easy way out of dealing with life's challenges and difficulties.

So what are stuffers to do? First all, it is okay to unstuff. It really is. I know from personal experience. Matter of fact, if I had not unstuffed, I might not be here today. As a former stuffer, I want to give you permission to unstuff your heart. That's right. I give you permission. Stuffing steals and robs us of the abundant, joyful, fulfilling life Jesus Christ provided for us through His death and resurrection. Unstuffing sets us free to be renewed in Christ and experience the good, acceptable and perfect will He has for our life (Romans 12:1-2).

## **How to Unstuff Stuffed Emotions**

*“Casting all you anxiety and cares upon Him (stuffed emotions too!), because He cares for you.” I Peter 5:7*

Peter tells us that God wants us to cast our cares, not carry them. Cast means to throw. We are to throw our emotions and feelings on the Lord, not stuff them in our hearts. You can be an emotion caster, not an emotional stuffer.

- Admit you are a stuffer. Go ahead, confess that you stuff your feelings.
- Decide to unstuff your stuff.
- Realize no one else, not even God, can unstuff you. You must unstuff you.
- Don't fear unstuffing your heart. Face your feelings with courage.
- Make a list of the stuff you have stuffed. Be honest and specific.
- Take one stuffed emotion at a time and cast it before the Lord.
- Apply God's promises and principles for emotional healing to your life.
- Clear your heart of stuffed stuff and resolve to never stuff feelings again.
- Don't hang out with emotional stuffers.
- Thank God for helping you unstuff your heart.

### **Stuffers get stuck in life.**

**Stuffed feelings keep us from going forward in our emotional and relational life. Stuffers survive, but never thrive in the present. Their emotional focus looks backward to the stuff they have stuffed. Stuffers are locked up in a prison of unexpressed and unresolved emotions that sometimes scream to be dealt with.**

Stuffing never contributes to healthy relationships.

For example, emotional stuffers make poor marriage partners because they never deal with life as it happens. They stuff when they need to share. They withdraw when they need to come close. They react negatively when they need to respond positively.

They protect their emotional turf when they need to let their guard down and trust the people they love to not hurt them.

*If you want to experience and enjoy healthy relationships, don't stuff your feelings. Allow God to help you be emotionally whole and stable. You will like being free from stuffers prison and having room in your heart for the things that really matter.*

### **Commandment for Healthy Emotions and Relationships.**

➤ *Thou (that means you!) shall not stuff your emotions.*

Stop stuffing and start releasing your emotions. Unpack the painful stuff. Why carry emotional pain any longer? Toss it. Cast it out. Say good bye to it. Be free to feel life in the good way God has planned for you.

**REMEMBER: Stuffing is for turkeys, not people. So if you are not a turkey, stuffing is not for you!**

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