

# Ask America's Ultimate Experts

## Q "Help my family get along this Thanksgiving!"

Hoping to bring your loved ones closer, nip disagreements in the bud and enjoy an amazing Thanksgiving? No problem! Here, top experts reveal how to make this Thanksgiving your most loving:

### 1 Strengthen bonds!

Bring everyone together with ideas from relationship experts Rick Brinkman, N.D., and Susan Newman, Ph.D.:

#### Boost bonding hormones!

It's easier than you think: Our experts promise that just a few small gestures can help everyone feel more loving and connected! All you have to do is greet your guests with a kiss, clasp their hand between yours or simply touch their arm or shoulder as they arrive. Multiple studies show that such affectionate physical contact immediately triggers the release of the bonding hormone oxytocin, helping everyone feel kinder and gentler toward one another!

#### Share what you're thankful for!

At the dinner table, take a moment and ask your loved ones to say what they're each most grateful for over the past year, suggests Brinkman. It's an easy way to encourage more meaningful conversation, which will naturally bring people closer. And tell people to share as much or as little as they want, so that everyone feels comfortable!



### 2 Foster family harmony!

Help everyone get along—and quash any disagreements—with these expert strategies:

#### Let the kids keep the peace!

A surefire way to get everyone to come together peacefully? Turn the conversation to the children, suggests Newman. Try: "Excuse me. Did you see your niece's art project? It's amazing!" Studies prove that our moods instantly soften when we think of children!

#### Stay positive with prayer!

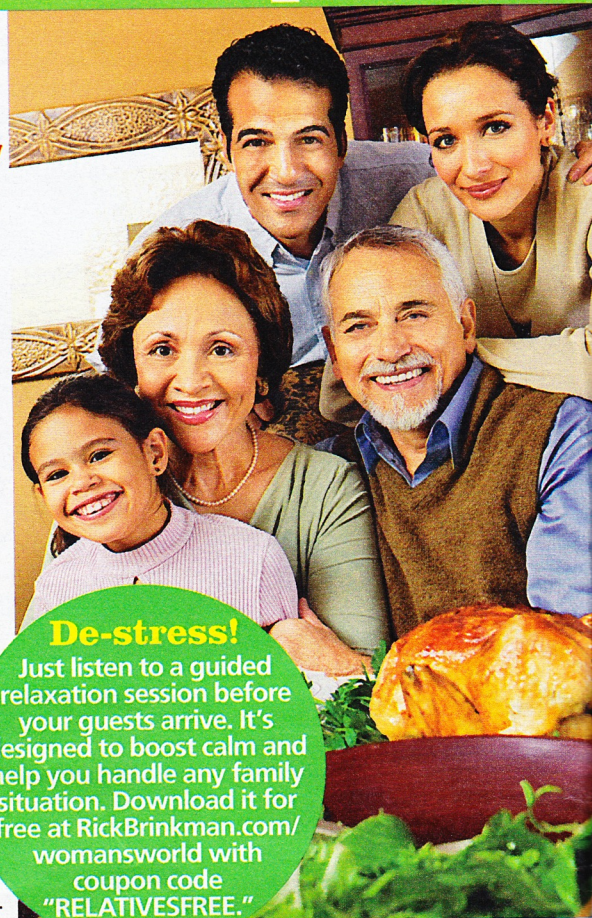
Instead of simply saying grace before you eat, pause a moment longer and ask each guest to silently say their own prayer! Its peace-keeping secret? Research proves that prayer has the power to banish negative emotions by nixing stress and replacing pessimistic thoughts with positive ones!

#### Keep the calm with compliments!

Research shows that receiving a compliment elevates people's moods as much as 30% for several hours! So be sure to dish them out as your guests arrive. Whether it's their outfit, haircut or hostess gift, just finding something positive to say to each person can shift everyone into a happier frame of mind!

#### Freeze friction with humor!

Table talk turning tense? Break in with a cute or clever line! For example: "Hey, what would we all rather do? Solve the world's problems, or have a piece of pie!" This trick does two things, says Brinkman: You're getting people to laugh, which gives them a surge of feel-good endorphins. Plus, you're creating a distraction and providing something positive to focus on, like dessert!



#### De-stress!

Just listen to a guided relaxation session before your guests arrive. It's designed to boost calm and help you handle any family situation. Download it for free at [RickBrinkman.com/womansworld](http://RickBrinkman.com/womansworld) with coupon code "RELATIVESFREE."

### Perfect a peaceful menu!

Serving the right foods can transform your dinner table from stressful to serene! Dietitian Erin Palinski reveals how:

#### ● Add garlic for good times!

Keep communication upbeat by adding garlic to your stuffing and gravy! Its aroma decreases the number of unpleasant mealtime interactions. The reason? The scent of garlic stimulates the release of mood-boosting brain chemicals like norepinephrine.

#### ● Make a mood-boosting stuffing!

Turn this holiday favorite into a spirit-lifting side dish by using whole-wheat bread instead of white! Whole-wheat foods contain complex carbs, which take longer to digest and prevent the blood-sugar spikes that trigger mood swings and irritability, says Palinski.



—Jennifer Leonard

## Our expert panel



**Rick Brinkman, N.D.** (RickBrinkman.com), is a holistic physician, counselor and speaker. He's also the coauthor of *Dealing with People You Can't Stand* and *Dealing with Relatives*.



**Susan Newman, Ph.D.** (SusanNewmanPhd.com), is a social psychologist and author of 15 books, including *The Book of NO: 250 Ways to Say It and Mean It*. She also blogs for *Psychology Today* magazine.



**Erin Palinski, R.D., L.D.N.** (ErinPalinski.com), is the owner of Vernon Nutrition Center, LLC, in New Jersey. She's shared her expertise on family nutritional health with media nationwide, including *The Early Show* and *MSN.com*.