

# KEEP YOUR WITS ABOUT YOU

SEEING THE HUMOR IN ALL THINGS WILL BE YOUR SUPREME COPING STRATEGY. EVEN BETTER THAN THAT THIRD GLASS OF MERLOT.



## • HOW THE "FUNNIEST WOMAN IN GEORGIA" LAUGHS HER WAY THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

BY ELIZABETH COSSICK AND LAURETTA HANNON

**ENOUGH ALREADY.** Every year, the holiday season somehow turns into the most over-planned/gas-guzzling/family-feuding/insert-other-hyphenated-crazy-making-adjective-here time of the year. But, *enough*. Why is it so hard to keep these sacred celebrations stress-free? We posed this question to Laretta Hannon, a writer and syndicated columnist whom *Southern Living* dubbed "the funniest woman in Georgia." Here's her take on the matter (which, of course, made us laugh—especially the bit about rabbit pellets).

**LBDILRW:** Okay, Laretta, so how do we do it? Help us transform the crazies back into cheermeister goodness.

**LH:** Sure thing. First, let's take a collective deep breath and resolve to savor the holidays rather than merely survive them. This is the time to relax and loosen up, not tighten up and lose our minds! Keep your perspective focused on what matters. How serious is it if your tree décor and the table runner in the foyer aren't an exact match? Okay then, carry on.

Second, maintain your sense of humor. Whether the labradoodle is barfing on the tinsel or Aunt Lurleen's casserole topping resembles rabbit pellets, keep your wits about you. Seeing the humor in all things will be your supreme coping strategy. Even better than that third glass of merlot.

And finally, simplify whenever possible. Buy fewer presents. Say no to activities that drain you. Start a new family tradition, like reading Truman Capote's *A Christmas Memory* out loud together. And, for the love of all things holy, avoid attempting anything you saw on Pinterest.

**LBDILRW:** Holidays or not, why is it sometimes a challenge to abide in happiness on a daily basis?

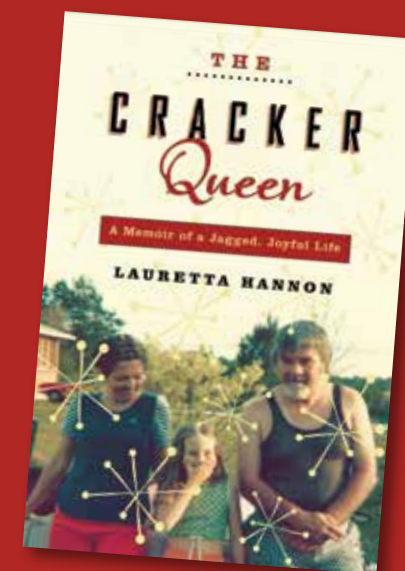
**LH:** Lots of reasons, but I think as women it's easy for us to get tangled up in what others want us to do or be, whether it's coming from society or your mother-in-law. This is self-sabotage and the surefire way to be miserable. But once you decide to be authentic—the woman you were born to be—the stars move into spectacular alignment, and it's a joy just to be alive.

**LBDILRW:** You've pretty much made a career out of applying this philosophy. How have you learned to be so joyful and authentic?

**LH:** My secret weapon is gratitude. When hard times visit, I look for the lesson or gift hidden in the dark corners—and remain thankful. When I lose something, I focus on what remains. I truly believe that what I have is always greater than what I lack.

I also agree with Leo Tolstoy that joy is our natural state. He said, "When joy disappears, look for your mistake." Those mistakes are found in what we focus our minds on, so I work hard at taking the mental garbage out and inviting the good stuff in. A lot of untapped joy can be found just by becoming more mindful of our negative wandering thoughts. Ask yourself: Is this something I'm going to be worrying about on my deathbed? If not, then let it go. Life's too short. Think happier and laugh more. Practice during the holidays—and then don't stop. ●

ASK YOURSELF: IS THIS SOMETHING I'M GOING TO BE WORRYING ABOUT ON MY DEATHBED? IF NOT, THEN LET IT GO.



Glean more joy from Laretta at [thecrackerqueen.com](http://thecrackerqueen.com) and catch her advice column every Tuesday in *The Marietta Daily Journal*.

FOR THE LOVE OF ALL THINGS HOLY, AVOID ATTEMPTING ANYTHING YOU SAW ON PINTEREST.



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