

Be a Friend/Be a Hero

**There's a
Hero in You**

**You are
Brave**

**You are
a Role
Model**

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Engaging Difficult Family Members

Many of us enjoy family gatherings and celebrations this time of year. Though your family may be celebrating differently this year, it is still important to maintain connection with loved ones but to also be aware of public health precautions including wearing masks, social distancing and washing hands regularly.

What should we do if there is a family member that gets under our skin or pushes our buttons? After all, we cannot choose our family like we can choose our friends. What is one to do? Do not fear. You are not alone, and there are strategies to help you make the best of a difficult situation.

Family: Can't Live with Them, Can't Live without Them

It's that time of year again: the holidays. For many that means time with family and friends. Even though time spent celebrating with people we love seems blissful, for many it is anything but. Relationships with family members may be loaded with triggers, patterns and emotional baggage that can be tricky to navigate. It is important to remember to focus on what you can control. You can take control of a situation and change the way you respond to difficult family members. Take a couple moments to breathe deeply. Focus on your breathing, and bring your attention to your body and current emotions that play a huge role in how you respond to a difficult family member. Be mindful of your own emotions and the impact you have on elevating or deescalating situations.

Take a Step Back and Reflect

Removing the negative energy you have can change the course of the exchange with a family member. Do your best not to take things personally. It may be that the person who causes you the most stress is dealing with their own personal limitations that make it difficult to have positive interactions. Recognizing this can change your mindset and allow you to communicate from a place of calm, compassion, and higher perspective. With this new found insight, it may become apparent the role we play in negative patterns with difficult family members. It is important to be honest with yourself. Write down what you know you have done in the past that has fueled a negative interaction with a loved one. When you see yourself going down the same path, you can immediately change the course of the interaction and direct it in a more positive tone.

Forgive, Forgive, Forgive

None of us is perfect which means there is no "perfect family." When talking with a difficult family member, the most profound, conscious, powerful, and freeing thing we can do is to forgive each other's shortcomings. We all need unconditional love and support. While each family has their own unique dynamics and set of difficulties, in the end, people desire to get along and to be loved and accepted, especially by family members.