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Real Families Have Fights – How to Keep the Holidays Happy

By Dr. Dorree Lynn

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Due to the complexity of our new normalcy, achieving wonderful holiday cheer may take a little extra work this year. For many people, Thanksgiving heralds a month of myths often culminating in January depression. Newspapers, magazines, the big and little screens and our own childhood wishes propel us towards dreams of wonderful Thanksgiving dinners, Chanukah gelt, Christmas gifts and New Year's revelry replete with resolutions almost surely broken within the month.

Dreams of perfect family dinners with everyone sitting down delighting in each other's company remain with us as we go "brain dead" and forget the fight we had with Uncle Joe two years ago and the reality that we can't stand Aunt Liz's two bratty kids. We try to ignore or we harbor resentment about events such as the year the dog bit your cousin and you remembered all too late that you were allergic to cats and that your grandmother had two.

December is often a very stressful and sad month, when all the while we hear jingle bells and are told how happy we will be. Real families are complex, composed of different personalities and values. Sometimes they really are able to get along for extended periods of time. Other times, the differences are too pronounced and being "flesh and blood" isn't enough to make everyone get along or even like each other.

Additionally, there are so many divorced families, single families and blended families that the longed for image of Norman Rockwell's traditional family is rapidly fading. Children have to be shared and shunted between households. Families splinter and new mates appear. Religious and political beliefs differ and all the while everyone gets exhausted from working so hard to get along.

Some families actually do get along but, even in the best of families, there is usually a point where someone has to get away and breathe their own bit of fresh air. The best gatherings are usually those where there is enough space to get away to be by oneself for a while and those that don't tend to go on endlessly for days. At times, a seemingly wonderful event can end with an unexplained hurt feeling or sudden eruption. Someone, usually innocently, says that one word or opinion too many and what had been a wonderful warm sense of eternal bliss flares into overt or covert chaos. If a version of this has

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happened in your family, don't feel guilty or badly about it. You are not alone or unique. Real families do fight.

However, there are ways you can keep a family festival from turning into a family feud. Keep your expectations realistic.

1. Plan ahead and bring what you need. Know whom you will get along with and stay away from sure-fire explosive subjects.
2. Visit for a reasonable time. One meal can often be magic. After three days people tend to get on each other's nerves.
3. Help out and be part of the team. But remember, the host and/or hostess are ultimately the boss. Their ways may not be your ways, but as the adage goes: "When in Rome do as the Romans do."
4. If you have special dietary needs such as no sugar or vegetarian only, let your host or hostess know in advance. It can hurt someone's feelings if they have cooked for days only to find you won't touch their food.
5. Stay away from Uncle Joe, or keep to small talk.
6. Remember a large family gathering is not the time to resolve unresolved personal issues.
7. If you must say something negative, try to speak to the individual alone.
8. Go with the best of intentions and good will and keep those intentions and good will.
9. Be ready to forgive. After all, that really is the meaning of this special time of year.
10. Help with the children. They are the future and they should make you smile. Life is too hard to do alone,

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Dr. D.

Dorree Lynn, PH.D.

Dr. Dorree Lynn is co-founder of the Institute for the Advanced Study of Psychotherapy and a practicing clinician in New York and Washington, DC. Dr. Lynn served on the executive board of the American Academy of Psychotherapists and she is on the editorial board of their publication, Voices. She is also a regular columnist for the Washington, DC newspaper, The Georgetown. Dr. Lynn is a noted speaker and well known on the lecture circuit.

Cheap Discount Holiday Travel For Families

By Dial2Travel

Many people believe that it's more difficult to get cheap holidays for families, but if you research, you can find some great money-saving deals.

Family holidays are inevitably expensive because of the number of people travelling. In addition, most families are bound by school holidays, which means that they have to travel during the year's peak seasons - Christmas, Easter and the summer. Try these tips to help keep costs down.

1. Travel out of season

If you have children that are below school age, then travelling outside the school holidays is a good way to keep costs down. Flying just a week before or after the main holiday periods can make a big difference to the price. For short breaks, try mid-week instead of weekend.

2. Try different accommodation

Instead of hotels, look into renting a self-catering apartment or villa. These are usually much cheaper than hotel accommodation and although you have to buy your own food, you can still make good savings, and you get the additional benefit of flexibility - eat and come and go as you choose - which is ideal for a family holiday.

3. Book early

If you like to return to the same place each year, then think about booking early. The earlier you book, the cheaper it can be and you can always book your accommodation and then wait for cheap flights to be released later on in the year. Register with online sites to get notification of good deals so that you can make savings as soon as possible.

4. Special family deals

Look out for package holidays that offer free flights or accommodation for children. Check out the small print to make sure that you really are getting a deal, but these are often great ways of ensuring that you don't have to spend a fortune on your family holiday.

By starting early and taking the time to look at special offers and family deals, you can take your family on a great holiday for a great price.

Dial2Travel specialises in discount travel, from package holidays to flights only. Visit our website now by clicking on

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