



Family Conflict and the Holidays

Gatherings with family and friends over the holidays are sometimes a recipe for conflict. If you are concerned that family quarrels may derail a holiday celebration, these tips may help:

- Avoid discussions about politics or other hot button topics. Politely decline to participate in conversations that you suspect will lead to disagreements.
- If someone's behavior is upsetting you, explain why using "I" statements. For example: "I don't like that nickname, and it hurts my feelings when you use it."
- Avoid passive-aggressive behavior, such as irritability, sarcasm, or talking behind someone's back.
- If you have a strained relationship with a family member, keep the lines of communication open. Set aside time to privately sort out your differences or discuss the conflict. When you can't find common ground, agree to disagree.
- Own your mistakes. A sincere apology is one of the simplest ways to defuse conflict. If you were thoughtless or inappropriate, acknowledge that your behavior was out of line. Look for ways to improve communication and avoid disagreements in the future.



- Ask a trusted family member for their thoughts on how to resolve a difficult or longstanding conflict. (It's best to do this in a private setting.) Avoid drawing other people into the disagreement or fueling family gossip.
- If you are struggling to curb your temper or avoid saying something that you may later regret, it's best to put the conversation on hold. Consider taking a walk or doing a chore until you cool off.
- Family dynamics often change as a person ages. It's okay to take a step back from a family situation that no longer seems healthy. Distance yourself from aggressive behavior or abusive language.

If family conflict is causing you stress, LifeMatters can help. We're available 24/7/365, even on holidays.

1-800-634-6433

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