



Home for The Holidays?

Family get-togethers can bring joy to the season – or misery. Here's how to deal with difficult relatives.

Family gatherings can be occasions to celebrate – or to dread. You look forward to seeing some relatives, but others leave you stressed.

The first step is to take care of yourself, says clinical psychologist Ramani Durvasula, PhD, a professor at California State University, Los Angeles.

“Protect your time and space,” she says. “Get your own room at a hotel or Airbnb [if you’re traveling]. Explain that you can’t stay up late.” When you’re rested and in control of your arthritis, you can more easily deal with annoyances and enjoy this “most wonderful time of the year.”

Remember that people won’t change for this one occasion, Durvasula adds. But you can safeguard yourself – and your holiday cheer – with these tips for handling some challenging personalities.

The Grinch

He detests this time of year, convinced the celebrations are wastes of time and money plotted by corporations. You dread getting cornered by the gloom and doom.

TRY THIS: When the conversation turns into grumbling, just smile and say “Happy holidays!” Then politely

exit ASAP. You won’t convince him that the season is magical.

Grudge-holder

Every year she airs grievances – “Some people seem to get more expensive presents every year.” Or “I have to sit here and pretend to be nice to him, even after he was so rude to me.”

TRY THIS: Remind her that every year is a fresh start. She will probably be disappointed no matter what you say; don’t let it become your problem.

Peter Pan

There needs to be a kids’ table for this person; his maturity hasn’t caught up with his age.

TRY THIS: As long as his actions and comments don’t cause you hardship, no need to judge. Embrace his joie de vivre.

Show-off

With five holiday trees in her McMan-sion, rest assured that every napkin, decoration and gift will be “just so,” and she’ll likely one-up your every move.

TRY THIS: Wear your ugly holiday sweater with pride, and remember that you don’t need to prove anything to her. Nod politely, congratulate her on her upcoming three-month cruise with her rock-star husband, and exit when it feels comfortable.

Never-helper

He sits on the couch watching TV, oblivious to everyone who’s been hustling to help serve, clean up or watch the kids.

TRY THIS: If you decide to urge him to help, be prepared for an eye-roll. Try appealing to his ego; for example, if he’s technically talented, ask him to set up the DVD player so the kids can watch *Frozen* again. —STEPHANIE STEPHENS