

# Surprise, Surprise: Not Everyone Likes Their Family Christmas

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A fellow recently said: “I hate the holidays. We go to my parent’s place-after a day or two I am fighting with my Father, my Mother starts moving into frazzle mode, and people avoid each other until it’s appropriate to leave.”

At least this young man is honest. Relationship tremors over the holidays happen yet many in these families pretend nothing is shaking, or they say to themselves, ‘what’s wrong with me, I don’t like these people.’

We assume we must like our family members especially at Christmas. This is far from true. You must love your family. Like is a different category.

Is this “like” being different from “love” idea hard to wrap your mind around? Think of it this way; a three year old keeps tipping over the garbage can because he is chasing the cat. Do you like the behavior causing the garbage to be on the floor? No. Do you love the child? Yes.

During the time of figuring out how to stop the garbage-tipping-over issue, the healthy parent will not dislike the child as a person or find the child disgusting. The *behavior* causing garbage on the kitchen floor is unacceptable, yet the actual child, him or herself as a person, is *not* someone from whom you withhold love. The *behavior* is not acceptable, even disgusting, yet the child is loved. The deed is not loved, the child is loved.

***Call this: Separate the deed from the doer.***

Where it gets tricky is when *adult* family members have behaviors you do not like.

Ask yourself: Is it OK to dislike how certain family members live their lives? Is it OK to not like how they communicate or how they treat you or treated you at one time?

If the answer is yes, it is OK not to like how they do or have done their life at times, then you may be on your way to improving your relationship with them.

In honoring your Father and Mother for example, one must honor their position and who they are in that position. That does not mean you must honor all of their decisions in life.

As we mature, life experience will teach us a lot about our attitude toward loved ones. We may not like a certain family member’s behavior. The challenge is to love each one as we love ourselves. Separating the deed from the doer will help us do just that.

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