

## Finding Holiday Harmony in Turbulent Times

Emotions are running high during these volatile political times, and many families are concerned about how to create a peaceful and respectful atmosphere when extended family and friends gather for the holidays. Especially with children carefully watching the adults in the family, it's important to be aware of the lessons we are teaching through our actions.

### I. Underlying issues

- If we can't achieve peace and respect within our own close circle of friends and family, how can we achieve it in our larger communities?
- If we can't be respectful as adults, how can we expect our children to be?
- We can't control the behavior of others, but we can take responsibility for ourselves. If we are hosting a gathering, we can set the tone in advance.

### II. Tips for achieving harmony in holiday gatherings

#### 1. Agree in advance to check politics at the door

*For example, you might send a message to everyone saying something like this: "If you're like me, you are overloaded with all of the conflict in our world and ready for a fun break to celebrate all that's good in our lives and relationships. I look forward to a great day together, hearing about what you've been up to, sharing some funny stories from the past, playing some games and having your kids show us their latest dance or piano piece."*

#### 2. Plan activities that shift the focus to other aspects of life

*Play some games that all generations can enjoy (board games, simple card games, charades). Go outside for a walk after dinner or, if there's snow, take the kids sledding or build a snowman. Have each family member tell about their most embarrassing childhood memory or a favorite story about a family member who is no longer with you. Share ideas for this year's New Year's resolutions or laugh about the resolutions you broke from last year! Pop some popcorn and watch a favorite holiday movie together.*

#### 3. Be prepared with de-escalating replies if someone baits you

*For example, you might say calmly, "I can see you feel strongly about that. Maybe we can talk more about that at another time." Or, "Yes, I've been hearing a lot of debate about those things, but I'm taking a break on that to focus on this holiday together."*