

ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

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One of the most pleasant and difficult aspects of the holidays is the family gathering. Parents, children, siblings, and in-laws congregate to celebrate (or torment?) one another. In our family we laughingly call these gatherings “forced family fun!”

When families gather we tend to revert back to the old pecking order of our youth. Buttons are pushed – boundaries are crossed – feelings are hurt – emotions run high. We are often left feeling irritable, anxious, and often depressed. And, we often react in the same way we may have coped as a child – not from our rational adult ego-state.

When our children are babies, we wrap them in bunting so they won’t get hurt. We protect them. We try to patch their wounds and comfort their hurts. We make every attempt to keep them from harm. Yet, too often, as adults, we neglect ourselves. We are self-critical. We allow grown children and critical relatives to hurt our feelings. We often take responsibility for the behavior of others.

We need to take care of ourselves. It’s imperative to practice self-care if we want healthy relationships with others. Listen to the inner voice of wisdom. Recognize that the behavior of others does not belong to us. Remember the words from Al-Anon, “I didn’t cause it, I can’t cure it, and I can’t control it.” We have no control of the behavior of others.

This holiday season, try to focus on the positive. Express gratitude often. Pay attention to your feelings and rationally evaluate your reaction. Are you falling into childlike ways of coping? Are you over-reacting? Are you taking responsibility for the behavior of others? Are you allowing old wounds to ruin your holidays?

Use awareness. Attempt to re-frame your thinking. Make your behaviors positive. Take good care of yourself. Talk about your feelings with a trusted friend. Or, ask for professional help.

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