Navigating The Holidays With Narcissistic Family & In-Laws

The holidays are supposed to be a time of joy, family, & togetherness. But what if spending time with certain family members is anything but joyful?

For people dealing with narcissistic family members or in-laws, the holiday season brings a ton of stress. Instead of looking forward to celebrations, you find yourself dreading family gatherings, anticipating criticism, or wondering how you will manage another holiday surrounded by people who treat you cruelly.

If this sounds familiar, there are some things worth remembering before accepting that holiday invitation.

One of the first things to consider is whether attending a particular gathering is actually worth the emotional cost. Will spending a few hours with these relatives simply be irritating, or is it likely to cause significant emotional distress? Are you hoping that attending will finally earn their approval or improve how they treat you? Unfortunately, if someone is determined to disapprove of you, attending another family gathering will not change that.

Also choosing not to attend does not mean you can escape criticism. You will be talked about, criticized to other relatives, or shamed for not showing up.

The real issue is not that the narcissistic family member misses you, but that your absence interferes with the “we’re just one big, happy family!” image they want everyone to believe.

If you choose to attend a holiday gathering, a little preparation can make a considerable difference.

Decide beforehand how long you intend to stay. If you attend with your spouse, agree on a word or phrase that means you need to leave immediately. Staying together makes it easier to support one another & recognize inappropriate behavior. Be cautious about allowing someone who routinely disrespects you or your spouse to spend unsupervised time with your children. Be polite, but be selective about what personal information you share.

Romans 12:18 in the Amplified Bible reminds us to live at peace with everyone, as far as it depends on us. You are responsible for your own behavior, not for making someone else behave appropriately.

Perhaps this year you opt to attend for an hour instead of spending the entire day. Maybe you will celebrate separately with relatives you genuinely enjoy. Or perhaps you decide that staying home is the healthiest choice. None of those decisions makes you a bad family member.

You cannot control what relatives say about you, whether they approve of your decisions, or how they choose to interpret your boundaries. Trying to manage everyone's opinions is exhausting, & not your responsibility.

What you can control is how you respond, what you share, & what you allow into your life. You deserve to enjoy the holidays without feeling obligated to sacrifice your emotional well being to maintain someone else's family image. You are allowed to choose peace over performance

I have created a practical guide, *"Navigating Holidays With Narcissistic Family & In-laws: Practical Ways To Make Wise Choices, Care For Yourself & Your Immediate Family"*, to help you make thoughtful decisions about attending family gatherings, establish protective boundaries, work together with your spouse, & protect your children from unhealthy family dynamics.

You do not have to navigate these situations without a plan or sacrifice yourself to make someone else happy.

Thank you for listening to my podcast!