

# NAVIGATING THE HOLIDAYS WITH YOUR IN-LAWS

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## YOUR PARTNER COMES FIRST

Surviving the “holiday hustle” requires open communication between you and your partner. This is your partner’s family and they may have a different perspective of them than you. It’s normal for couples to have to adjust to each other’s feelings about their parents. If you can maintain respect and open communication throughout this process, you’ll both win.

## CHECK YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Recognize that you are engaging with people who have their own feelings, thoughts, and behaviors completely separate from you. If you bring a mindset of curiosity to your family gatherings this year, you may learn things about your partner and their family (and yourself!) that you never knew before. Nobody is perfect, so don’t pressure yourself to be, and don’t expect to receive that from your family. Knowing this can help you not take things so personally.

## DON'T TRY TO MAKE EVERYONE HAPPY

People-pleasing your way through the holidays will lead to you feeling drained. It is understandable to want to walk into holiday get-togethers on your best behavior, but you don’t need to filter your actions to the point of putting everyone else’s needs and wants before your own. Focus on being yourself.

Don't say "yes" when you mean no.

## PICK YOUR BATTLES

The holidays really don’t need to be about confronting family issues. You don’t have to get into it over pie and eggnog. If you foresee family drama occurring over the holidays at any of your get-togethers, sit down with your partner beforehand and create a game plan together.

## HAVE AN EXIT PLAN

Create a code word or phrase and agree to remove yourselves from any potentially scarring situations before they get too out of hand. Believe it or not, there are many people who feel that dysfunctional and abusive family dynamics are just something they have to endure and get over, which is simply not true.

## NURTURE YOUR RELATIONSHIP

That’s right, consider how you might actually lean into your relationship with your in-laws this holiday season. Commit to trying some new ways to respond to, and connect with, your in-laws this year. Growth begins when you step out of your comfort zone. Take this opportunity to dive into some new ways of relating to the people who will be in your life for years to come.

According to Dr. John Gottman, “every marriage is a cross-cultural experience regardless of whether people are from different or the same cultures. They come from different families and the family they create is a brand new culture that has never existed before.” The holidays can bring mixed feelings and expectations about this new family culture, especially when it comes to in-laws”.

You can use the suggestions above to empower you to handle any situation with confidence.

For more information for couples, go to [www.gottman.com](http://www.gottman.com).