

FAMILY DYNAMICS & MULTIPLE GENERATIONS

By Donna Deos

Family Dynamics and Multiple Generations are two really big topics. Perhaps we'll take them individually and then talk about them together.

Family Dynamics are how we relate to each other within our respective families. We have our immediate families: parents, children, siblings; and we have our extended families: aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews, in-laws, etc.

Since families are made up of lots of individuals, there are many opportunities for interesting dynamics!

We each have our own personalities, preferences, hot buttons and ways we think things should be done. Sometimes these things align and sometimes they do not.

Families tend to have collective beliefs and values on things too. Of course, not everyone agrees, but there do seem to be trends in behavior, belief and even ways of communicating within families.

When we are growing up we learn the way our family tends to lean, think and do things. Because we are a group of similar individuals with collective belief systems, we tend to think our way is the right way and that other ways are wrong.

The funny thing is everyone else feels that way about their familiar belief systems and ways of doing things too.

When we are kids and go to a friend's house we start to learn that not everyone does things the same way. Sometimes we learn good things from this, sometimes we are shocked, awed and perhaps even scared at what we learn. Some families find yelling at each other to be acceptable communication. Some do not. Some pray before each meal and some do not. The differences go on and on.

If you come from a quiet non-aggressive family visiting a boisterous, rowdy and perhaps confrontational one can be quite the surprise. I am sure the reverse is true as well. Throughout all of this we learn and grow. We find new ways of doing things and develop into our own unique person.

Eventually, we find someone we love, want to be with and raise our own family with. This person could come from a very different background and belief system, which poses its own challenges. These are not insurmountable but do require compromise and bending on both sides for it to be successful.

Now, let's throw some different generations into the mix. Persons of the current generation tend to be very different from their parents and wayyyyy different from their grandparents. Still, each generation believes in the way they do things to be the right and best way. Watching other generations do it very differently can be stressful and frustrating.

Imagine being 3 of those different generations living in the same household! I have been there, done that twice in my life. Once growing up with my Grandmother living with us (boy did us rambunctious kids stress her out!) and later



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with my daughter and I living with my parents. I can honestly tell you so far from my experience being the middle generation is the hardest. I have absolutely no intention of doing it again at the high end!

I think being the oldest generation and watching all that goes on nowadays, and knowing you have little control to help out (because they mostly don't want your input, because they are convinced their way is right) to truly be the hardest.

Generations are so very different these days. My grandparents were turn of the century children who were having children during the great depression. My parents were post-depression era children. They then raised us at a time and in a town where money was more prevalent and kids were more indulged. Other kids, that is! My parents were still living post-depression era lives due to family beliefs and learned behaviors from their lives. They were also older when they had us, which also contributed to the differences.

At any rate, the point is, we are all who we are. We got there through our life experiences and our personal choices. No one way of doing things is the only right way. Life is about learning compromise and working together. It is about loving and supporting each other as best we can. Sometimes that means spending less time together.

If your kids and grandkids drive you nuts – join the club! We drive them nuts too. It has been going on like this for longer than we all know. If you don't enjoy spending time together because it is too stressful, then don't! You do have control. You can decline the invites and you can withhold giving invites. You can also discuss why there aren't many invites.

Just because you are family doesn't mean you have to take on things that make you unhappy. It also doesn't mean you have to bite your tongue and hold things in. Honesty about how you feel and why you are making the choices you do will help others start to realize their "only true right way" isn't really all they think it is! It is not until we learn how our actions affect others that we can truly learn and grow from that information. You can't fix what you don't know is wrong.

Here's hoping you cannot relate to this month's article at all!

Wishing you peace and happiness, Donna

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