



## *SEASON'S GREETINGS!*



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# Ergo Solutions Newsletter

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS**

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## RICHARD'S HELPFUL HOLIDAY HINTS: Family Dynamics During Holiday Activities



Most of us are faced with the issues surrounding dealing with our families or in-laws during holiday activities. Some find the thought of being cooped up with “Those People” for several hours during these events absolutely terrifying. Many associates

have come to me with the approach of the holidays seeking advice on how to deal with their family issues. In researching how to help them deal with the problem, I ran across the following article written by Jolene Roehlkepartain, a writer and an educator. She has written more than 30 books, including *Doing Good Together*, *Parenting Preschoolers with a Purpose*, and *Nurturing Faith in Families*.

I hope the article will help you find peace and family harmony during this holiday season.

### 7 Ways to Defuse Family Tensions During the Holidays

By Jolene Roehlkepartain

Who do you dread seeing in your family over the holidays? Which relationships are tense? All families have their difficulties, and the holidays often bring these to the forefront. So what do you do?

Here's what the experts recommend:

**Focus on what you have in common rather than on differences.** It's tempting to point fingers at the family member who has a drinking problem or the one who doesn't help out with the holiday festivities. Instead, enjoy the fact that you're seeing the person. Help your kids connect with the person (while also keeping boundaries if you're concerned that the person may influence your kids in negative ways).

**Know your needs and take care of your needs.** Some people need more space than others. If you need time to unwind and have some alone time, tell others about what you need and why. If you disappear without telling others, people tend to assume the worst and blame themselves (or you).

**Create rituals that bring people together.** One of the difficulties with extended families is that it's easy to stay isolated from each other because people are more comfortable with their own immediate families. To overcome this, play easy games that bring people together. Many families enjoy the game *Life Stories* that encourages people to talk and get to know each other.

**Know your part in the tension.** Whenever there's tension, it's easy to assume it's always someone else's fault, yet psychologists say that everyone has a part in the tension. Be clear about your part and work to change your role so that you're diffusing the tension rather than adding to it. A helpful book is *The Dance of Anger* by Harriet Goldhor Lerner, Ph.D.

**Focus on differences after the holidays.** Sometimes people can no longer tolerate the tension and they burst and melt down during the holidays. If you know there's tension, acknowledge it beforehand and then work to set aside those differences during the holiday. Mark a date on your calendar after the holidays to work through the tension with the person (or to talk to a person who is part of the tension with someone else). That way, you'll be less likely to create a scene at a holiday event.

**Be honest with kids but don't tell them everything.** Kids soak up tension like sponges. They know when it's there. You can be honest and state that there are tensions (and where they're coming from), but kids don't need to know all the details. Plus, it helps kids to know that the tension is coming from somewhere else and isn't their fault.

**Do something different during a holiday gathering.** The only way for a family to change is when someone does something different. If you avoid a certain person, try making small talk with the person for a short time. If you're used to arguing with a family member, work on avoiding that. Do something that others don't expect, and do something that's positive rather than negative.

Make the holidays something that you and your kids look forward to, even if you're just creating one aspect of the holiday that gets you excited. In our family, we often buy a new board game to play in the afternoon. The kids love doing something new, and an easy board game is a great way to invite other extended family members to join in.

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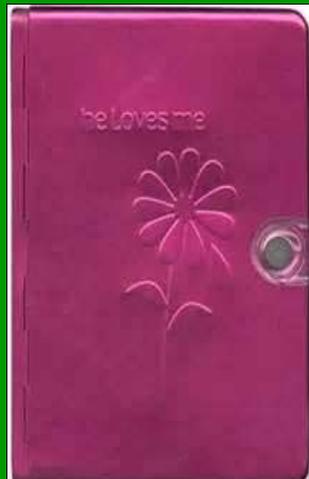
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**What are Your  
Favorite  
Activity During  
the  
Festive Holidays?**

**"Baking  
Cookies"**

**"Singing  
Christmas  
Carols"**

**"Watching  
Football"**

**"Stringing Popcorn  
Garlands"**

**"Decorating"**

**"Giving Gifts"**

**"Looking at  
Christmas  
Lights"**

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM ERGO SOLUTIONS!**



