

Thanksgiving with the Family - Tips for Survival

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Ask an Expert: Thanksgiving with the Family – Tips for Survival

It's that time of year when family members travel from far and wide to gather, give thanks and eat a large meal together. Thanksgiving can be a wonderful time filled with traditions, famous family recipes and catching up with each other's lives. However, some view Thanksgiving with concern about how everyone will get



along.

Here are some do's and don'ts to help your family have a better chance for a peaceful, enjoyable Thanksgiving this year.

First, a few "Don'ts"

- **Don't talk politics or bring up other "hot topics."** Often the urge is to help family members "really understand" your position or understand why their position is irrational and wrong. Too often, this ends with slamming doors and someone crying in another room or the car.
- **Don't be sarcastic, critical or give subtle jabs.** These can cause emotions to escalate quickly, and feelings can get hurt.
- **Don't try to fix each other's problems over one meal.** Also, don't discuss the problems of other family members who aren't there. The Thanksgiving meal is not the time to suggest someone get out of a relationship, sell a house, be a better parent or start exercising.
- **Don't take things personally.** Some family members are more "prickly" than others, but choose not to get defensive. If someone does start fishing for a reaction, don't take the hook.

Here are some "Do's"

- **Take charge of seating.** Set the table for success by separating conflicting personalities. Set the conspirators near you so you can put out fires and guide the conversation.
- **Remind yourself why you are doing it.** You love your family (most of them?), and ultimately, people are more important than problems.
- **Ask others about their lives.** Don't talk about yourself the entire time.
- **Give kids responsibilities, but then turn them loose.** Kids simply aren't going to enjoy being trapped at a table for long periods of time. They get restless and whiny. It's okay if they run off after trying most of the foods. Don't turn it into a battle. Have something for them to do after the meal.

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