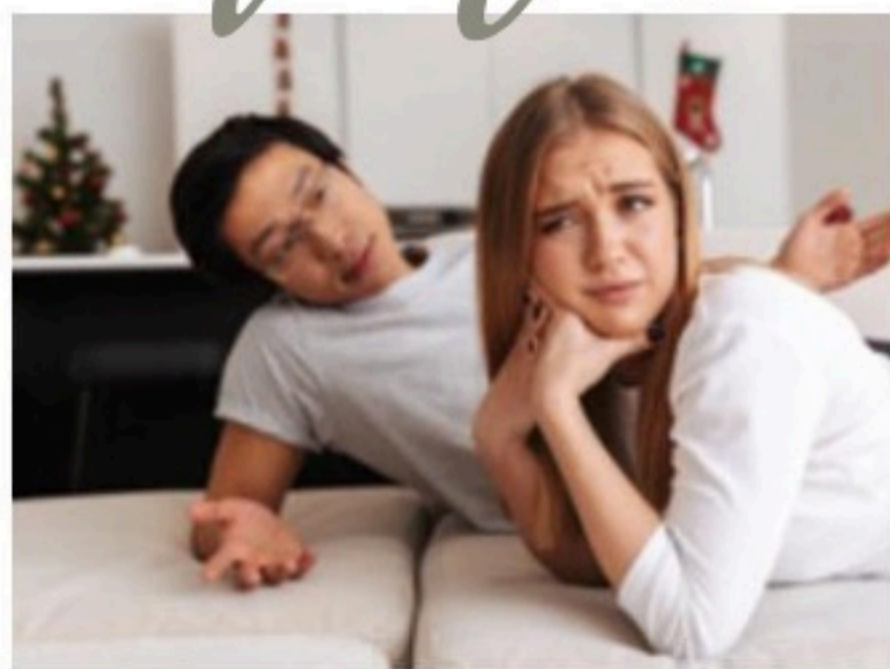


tis' the season of compromise



THE HOLIDAY SEASON REPRESENTS

long-standing family traditions, rituals, memories, celebrations, and reconnection. Unfortunately, the holidays can also lead to stress, arguments, and exhaustion. Navigating holiday planning with family is a common theme in couples therapy. New couples sometimes struggle to create new and unique traditions together while trying to meet the expectations of extended family. Coordinating schedules and planning with others in mind can add unnecessary friction and strain within the relationship. Therefore, it is crucial to create an emotionally safe space to express needs and desires. Unaddressed or invalidated desires can sometimes turn into gridlock and contempt for your partner. Failing to honor and respect your partner's needs can lead to constant conversations without progress, and that leads to hurt, frustration, and feelings of rejection. As a result, humor and affection may decrease, partners may disengage emotionally, or they may start to vilify each other.



➔ **The happiest marriages are those who willingly accept influence from the other.**

Accepting influence is uncovering and understanding the meaning of your partner's position in the conflict, yielding rather than demanding your way ... hearing and accommodating each other with love and respect and valuing the other more than the thing you want. This principle demonstrates that you are important, and your opinions matter to me even if I disagree with you.

➔ **Listening to your partner's feelings and opinions as you make decisions will contribute to successful holiday planning.**

Before making decisions, listen to each other's thoughts and feelings to convey, "we are a team, we're in this together, and we need each other." To begin, pray and invite God into the conversation. Pray for the wisdom of what to say, the knowledge of what not to say, and a "heart to hear" one another.

➔ **Schedule time together where you can each share your "dream" within the conflict.**

Usually, the "dream" is a deeply rooted desire for your life and your family hidden within the heart. Therefore, you have to become a "dream detective" for your partner. Approach these conversations with an open spirit and willingness to be flexible. Consider the reasonable part of your partner's requests and figure out a way to accommodate the dream. Listen and validate your partner's desires and find ways to compromise.

Here are some helpful conversation tips as you approach holiday planning. Take turns as listener and speaker.

🔊 **LISTENER** "Dream Detective"

- ⊕ Create a safe space without judgment, listen and validate.
- ⊕ What are your feelings about the issue?
- ⊕ What do you need? What do you hope will happen?
- ⊕ Why is this so important to you?
- ⊕ What is the story beneath this dream, or does it relate to your childhood in some way?
- ⊕ Is there a deeper purpose or goal?

🗣️ **SPEAKER**

- ⊕ Clearly and honestly talk about the feelings and beliefs of your position.
- ⊕ Explain where the desire comes from and what it symbolizes.
- ⊕ Use "I" statements. Express what you need, but don't argue or try to persuade your partner.
- ⊕ Avoid blame, shame, and criticism. 🚫



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You can find more in-depth information on this topic in "Seven Principles of Making Marriage Work" by Dr. John Gottman.