



Holiday Hints for staying Grown-Up

Have you ever noticed yourself feeling small and unusually quiet, or loud and boisterous, or maybe controlling and perfectionistic at a family gathering? Perhaps you've heard your "teenage-self" spitting inappropriate words out of your mouth before you can stop yourself? Family functions tend to be the perfect setting for us adults to regress back to roles and patterns we held in childhood.

Emotional regression can make fully functioning, mature adults suddenly feel and act much younger than they actually are. It happens to all of us. Regression is the reaction we have when something in the present triggers a memory about something that happened in the past.

Mature adults respond, regressed people react.

Know yourself and the main role you played in your family: Were you the hero child trying to be perfect? The scapegoat who was blamed as the problem? The entertaining mascot whose job was to make everyone laugh? The lost child who stayed quiet and distant? Be aware of yourself slipping back into your assigned childhood role and make a decision to step out of what's no longer useful. Today you have a choice.

A great self-check question at family functions is, "How old am I feeling right now?" If it's any age younger than your current age, keep your mouth SHUT! Our younger selves may spew damaging words which we will later regret.

Check in mentally and physically - Are you in your body? Are you thinking clearly? If not, try the following:

Take a bathroom break - remind yourself that you are ok, run cold water on your hands, take some belly breaths, feel your feet on the floor.

Go outside - lean against a tree, sit on the ground, notice all you can see around you, breathe.

Check your priorities - are they to give a perfect holiday presentation or to be wholeheartedly present with your loved ones? Get centered and breathe from your heart.

Calm your nervous system - breathe 3 counts in and 6 counts out (exhale longer than inhale) press your fingertips together, push your feet into the floor, use your hands to gently tap alternate knees, arms or legs back and forth.

I used John Lee's book GROWING YOURSELF BACK UP: Understanding Emotional Regression for help with writing this article. If this topic is of interest to you, I highly recommend it!

* When you sense that there is more "feeling" in your body than what the present situation warrants, it is most likely triggering something from your past that is unresolved. I can help you with this.

Kim Tayler MA, LCDC, LPC-Intern
Supervised by Sunny Lansdale PhD, LPC-S
737-204-8855
kim@kimtayltherapy.com
kimtayltherapy.com

