

Hints For A Happy Holiday

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — Home for the holidays. For some people, the phrase brings a sense of anticipation, thoughts of good food and good friends. In others, it instills anxiety and fears of conflict.

"Some conflict is almost inevitable when groups of people are together in one place for an extended period of time — even in families that have strong and supportive relationships," says Dr. Billie Frazier, a human development specialist with the Cooperative Extension Service, Maryland Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources.

"Such conflict tends to occur over issues involving power and control, values and attitudes,

respect, gratitude, lifestyles and — especially this year — money. The conflict can affect anyone — from teen-agers home from college to parents playing host to several generations."

Although there is no such thing as a perfect visit, there are ways to defuse family tensions and increase the probability of a pleasant visit. They involve planning ahead and a willingness to change (at least temporarily) old behavior patterns that cause strife among family members.

Dr. Frazier recommends the following guidelines, which she adapted from research appearing in the November 1988 issue of *Psychology Today*:

- * Have realistic expectations;

discuss your expectations and those of your relatives ahead of time to avoid any surprises and misunderstandings.

- * Plan your visit for the optimal length of time — not too long and not too short.

- * Alternate time together with time alone. Take walks. Go to another room and read a book.

- * Think about possible disagreements that could arise and how you will respond if and when they do.

- * Realize that people have different attitudes and beliefs and that maintaining a valued relationship is frequently more important than winning an argument.

- * Maintain a sense of humor. Laugh at the small stuff, and learn

to laugh at yourself.

- * Develop or maintain mutual respect across generations for different values and needs.

- * Be considerate. Do not tie up

the telephone or monopolize the television.

- * Respect the rules of the house, and abide by them.

Merry
Christmas



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