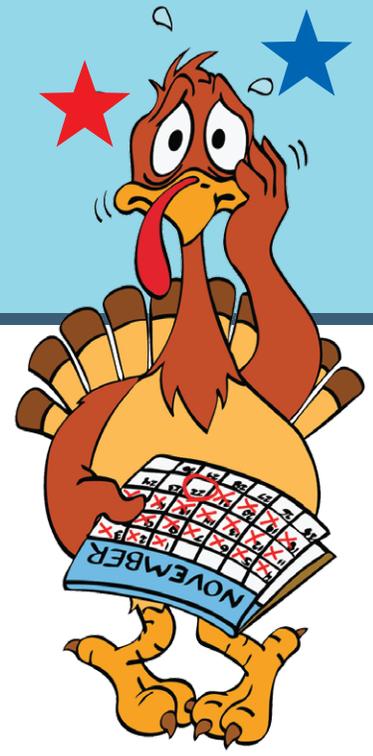


Don't Let Politics Ruin Thanksgiving!



Declaring Thanksgiving a “Vacation from Politics” can help many families enjoy a peaceful holiday gathering. But such a rule many not be respected by all, even if they are reminded of it. If things get heated, here are some tips for bringing the tension down.

1. Avoid Alcohol and Drugs

Alcohol and other substances can distort your ability to accurately process a situation. You will be more effective if you are clear-headed.

2. Control Your Reactions

You can't control other people, but you can control yourself. Measure the responses that you want to give. Will they help the situation? Be aware of your body language and tone of voice.

3. Use Active Listening

The frustration of being judged or misunderstood often increases hostility. Active listening means truly listening to fully understand the other person's point of view – and making sure that they know that you understand. Use open-ended questions, and check in regularly by paraphrasing to confirm that you are “getting” their perspective. Keep asking questions until you really do understand.

4. Empathize

Even if you disagree with the other person, suspend judgment. Your ability to truly understand why they feel the way they do and why it is so big for them – and to let them know that you understand – can help diffuse the conflict.

5. Be a Peace Maker

If you are not a direct participant in the conflict, you may be able to help bring the conflict to a more smooth and positive conclusion by temporarily setting aside your own opinions and using the above steps with both sides.

6. Be Open to New Information

If someone cites “facts” that we consider untrue, rather than immediately discounting the information, we can offer to spend time in the coming weeks doing our own research to learn more. We can ask the other person for the best sources of information to begin our research. Our goal in doing so is not necessarily to end up agreeing with the other person, but rather to gain a more thorough understanding of how and why they have come to believe what they do, and why they feel as strongly as they do.

7. Consider Your Audience and Be Respectful

If your research results in you later refuting the other person's views, be respectful as you present your findings – and be certain that your sources of information will be seen by the other person as credible and objective. Their points of view are likely as deeply held as yours, and they may not be persuaded by you, just as you may not be persuaded by evidence that they present. Remember that continued dialogue is important, but respect and active listening are essential to keeping that dialogue going in a positive direction.

8. Get Help if You Need it

To learn more about conflict resolution, or to get assistance in resolving a dispute in Hennepin County, contact Community Mediation & Restorative Services, Inc.



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