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Tips for bringing your guy home for the holidays



We asked April Masini, relationship and dating expert behind the AskApril.com advice column and author of *Think & Date Like a Man*, for some dating advice on getting through the holiday season conflict-free when you bring your guy home for Christmas. "Going home for the holidays with a significant other can be difficult," she says. "But there are ways to get around these potential differences and conflicts to make a holiday visit more pleasant than it might be."

Be realistic

Your parents aren't perfect — nor is the rest of your family. They have flaws just like everyone else (including you) has flaws. "You're not going to have a recognizable version of a Norman Rockwell painting at holiday time," Masini says. "If you expect anything different, you're going to be disappointed, so be realistic about what can or cannot happen at the holiday time visit."

Lower your expectations

Don't expect Christmas dinner to go off without a hitch. Does it ever? Expect that someone will try to engage you in an argument or insult you or your partner (hello, annoying sister-in-law). You might not like it, but as Masini says, "This is real life." If your parents or other family members have a habit of picking fights at the dinner table, don't assume they'll be on their best behavior just because you brought your boyfriend with you. Expect the usual rants and you won't set yourself up for any nasty surprises.

Let go of anger

When those barbs and insults come flying — directly or veiled — don't go on the defense and don't attack back, Masini advises. "In fact, the best way to take someone's power to hurt you away from them is to step out of the way," she explains. Practice saying things like, "I know things are tense, but I'm just glad we can all be here together." A statement like that can help neutralize the tension around you. If things get too heated, and you find yourself aching to fight back, leave the room. Excuse yourself and take a walk to calm down.

Don't pressure yourself

Avoid putting too much pressure on this one visit. "Think of this visit as one in a series of visits that will occur over the years," Masini says. "If you have to cut this visit short because it's too tense, be understanding and see the glass as half full. At least you made it through two of the four day visit!" Not everything will go perfectly just because it's



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Pretend you're elsewhere

Old habits die hard, so this year do things a little differently. "Don't use your same old manners. Pretend you're visiting a family you don't know and for whom you would use your best manners," Masini advises. "Bring a gift to your hostess, offer to do some of the cooking, clear the table. Treat your family the way you would guests and raise the bar a little." You never know how a simple shift in attitude can change how you interact with your family for the better.

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