

Relatives

Why is it that we can pick our friends but not our relatives? Could it be that relatives can be our greatest teachers as well as our greatest tormentors?

Who causes you the most frustration? Who can you not easily get rid of? Who always seems to end up back in your way? Who do you get tired of putting up with? Of course, it is the relative!

Do we all have a relative from Hell, or does it just seem so? Is our relative worse than yours? Is our story better, more dramatic, or more compelling? Can we easily top another person's story about their interactions with relatives?

One night Winston Churchill was at a dinner party and drinking. A guest told him that if he were her husband, she'd put arsenic in his drink. He replied, 'If you were my wife, I'd gladly drink it.'

If you have awful relatives is it possible they feel the same way about you? Do they tell stories of how awful you are? Your reality is that you are correct. What is their reality? What do they feel the truth is? Do they even give you and your concerns a thought?

Do they know of your concerns and frustration? Yes, even if you have not discussed them openly, they know. Communication is done as much without words as with words. Communication has much to do with body language, looks, how things are said and what isn't said. Yes, they know. They may not face it or address it, but they know. They can feel your vibrations.

Let's make a list of all the awful things they did. Let's see how many times they imposed on us. Let's see how they shortchanged us. Let's see how many times they failed to include us. Let's see how many times they took advantage of our good nature. Let's see how many times they let us carry the full load while they did not assist.

OK the list is made. Now the work begins. Let's put their best response beside our issue. There always seems to be two sides to each story and two

realities to what is, what happened, and why. Yes, if you are honest, can some of the items on a stand alone basis be crossed off?

Now, what do we do with the items left? How many, if any, are mistakes or errors in judgment that we have ourselves made or could have made? Can we look at these with compassion and understanding and cross them off? Are there any that were unintentional? Can we cross these off?

Now we are closer to the real, if any, issues. It may be attitude, it may be effort made or not made in helping a mother or father, or it may be different life styles and values.

Attitudes, lifestyles and values are problematic. We are who we are. We may feel we are fine and the problem lies with the other person. That person feels as we do. Who is to judge right or wrong? Let's try to accept what is and what we cannot change. Let's be glad we have our values and leave their values to themselves. Few people can convert another unless the other wants to be converted. As we all have our own reality, what is right for us may not be right for them. Perhaps we should be thankful we are not them.

Could the problem be one being jealous of another? Could the problem be a difference in income levels? Could the problem be one person pretending to be superior or smarter than the other? If so, remember we are all one. We all have given skills and each person has value. Perhaps the wealthy person is the one respected and liked by all and not the tyrant with all the money, no friends, and no life. Things are not always as they seem and appear on the surface.

A big problem always seems to be elderly parents. Who does what for the parents and who doesn't do their fair share? Who is the judge and ruler as to fairness? What are the measurements? What are the influencing life issues and factors? Can the other person do their percentage based on their own family issues and needs? Does the other person have the skills and/or money to participate equally?

The first step is to sit and discuss the issues, sharing of duties, and responsibilities, without blame or judgment. This is far more difficult than it sounds. Each person must be upfront and honest as well as being willing to

listen. Ideally, there will be understanding of people's feelings and issues. You do not have to agree; but you can at least respect the other person.

Every person is responsible for themselves and must live with their decisions and actions. Life may not seem fair; but it does balance out in the end. One solution is to do what you feel you can do and will be comfortable doing without regard to what someone else does or does not do. Go to your limit as you would want someone to do for you. Remember how often others have helped you. Remember also the joy and good times that result from helping someone else. After a loved one dies you can feel comfortable that you did what you could do. You will be at peace with your actions.

At the end of the day it is about you, your actions, and reactions. Do what you feel is right letting others make their own decisions. All of us will live with our decisions and they need to be right for us.

You are not your relative nor are you their keeper. Perhaps you can learn from the situation and be a better person. People interact with us and come into our lives to teach us and to test us. It seems relatives are the ones most likely to test us. Why not pass the test? Why not use the issues to learn more about ourselves? Why not be bigger than the other person? Why not move on without judgment?

Accept what is and what you cannot change. Be true to yourself. For your own health and wellbeing forgive others. You just might find that they are not as bad as you thought. You might find that if you are nice they will be, also. Why, you might end up liking your relatives. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

