Crazy Family Times at the Holidays

December 11, 2019 By Karen Hoyt

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Our household was always pretty exciting growing up. Dad drank a lot, and that could lead to either rocking around the Christmas tree, or the Christmas fight from #*&%. I vowed that my home would only honor the best traditions, and non of the messiness. I promised myself that there would be no crazy family times at the holidays. Well, even though I steered away from alcohol, I came to learn that making personal vows didn't always work.

Crazy Family Times at the Holidays

Dad and mom had big family get togethers at the holidays. Since both sets of grandparents were business owners, presents, and pictures were important. However, I always think of Aunt Cora, who had moved off to pursue a career in New York City in the 1920s. Family pictures showed a vivacious young woman with a huge smile, and bright eyes. After a struggle with depression, a high dollared doctor gave her a lobotomy, which was a cruel practice. It was so popular at the time that even Rosemary Kennedy, the sister of JFK had one. Sadly, she came home to Tulsa as a different person. Many years she spent a few weeks with us at Christmas. During those times, our house was quieter. We were taught to be gentle with her, and show love.

Relatively Speaking

I thought that our family was normal, since it was all I knew. After going to friend's houses, I saw that not everyone had ups and downs, alcoholism, or an Aunt Cora. Some of my friends lived in homes where no one drank or threw things at each other. Did that mean there was some kind of "normal" family where everything was perfect? Nah. We've all got some strange people climbing around in our family tree, but it took me a while to realize that it was okay that I had some crazy family times at the holidays in my childhood.

For many years, as a young adult, I upheld my childhood vow, and went for the Hallmark Movie look. Everything was decorated perfectly, with all the trimmings, prayers, and candles lit. You could practically see a halo in my family pictures. It was a hard gig to keep up with, especially since I was living with a silent liver disease and moved into stage 4 by the time I was 50.

My gatherings were with friends, family, church, or work friends. I found that they all had crazy family times at the holidays too. One year, I invited my Sunday School class over for a party. I later learned that they were secretly serving wine out in my garage. It felt good to know that there was

a loving balance in my life. I often taught about grace, letting go of fear, and allowing ourselves to be loved just like we were.

Keeping Up the False Front

I worked in medical, owned a business, and then later worked as teacher. Everyone from doctors and nurses, employees, co-workers, truck drivers, teachers and students talked about their traditions. Imagine the relief I felt when hearing others discuss their crazy family times at the holidays. I felt less anxious to keep up the perfect family false front. I designed my own family traditions without fear of stigma or judgment.

At work, people may spend a lot of hours together, but they really don't know what goes on behind closed doors. Sure, someone might get clobbered at the office Christmas party and make some judgment errors, but eventually, everything gets back to business.

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