

Synergy Coaching Services

Tina Elliot, MBA, PCC – Professional Certified Coach

Holiday Strategies For Dealing With The Relative From H*ll

Play Dysfunctional Family Bingo

By Tina Elliot, MBA, PCC

We all love our families and will always be there for them. However, I have found in working with my clients over the years that most of us have at least one dysfunctional member who can turn a Holiday gathering into a nightmare if allowed. Dysfunctional Family Bingo was originally published in O Magazine by Martha Beck, Life Coach, and is a tool to shift your nightmare gathering to a time of fun, laughter and enjoyment. **Looking for quick relief? Skip down to the bottom of this page for Synergy Coaching's quick and easy version of the game.**

The original game from Martha Beck:

A few weeks before the Holidays, gather with your trusted friends and provide each person with a bingo card. Each player fills in her bingo squares with dysfunctional phrases or actions that are likely to surface at her holiday gathering. See the sample Bingo card below. When you have filled your bingo card you are ready to attend your family gatherings. Whenever you observe something that appears on your bingo card, mark off that square. The first person to get "bingo" must sneak off to call the other players and announce bingo victory. If no one has a full bingo, the person who has the largest number of marked off squares wins the game. The winner shall be determined at the post-holiday meeting when they will be granted the ever-gratifying free lunch. A blank bingo card is included at the end of this report for your use.

If being captured by pirates and made to walk the plank at the end of a sharp sword is more appealing than having a slice of turkey and spoonful of mashed potatoes with your family, you may need to play this game. If your assertiveness training goes right out the window when Uncle Ted slugs back the last of your \$100 bottle of Scotch like it was lemonade, you may need to play this game.

A very close friend of mine said that her family Holiday get-together is so stressful that #1 on her to-do list is to have an uncorked bottle of Cabernet within arms reach. When asked what her fondest Dysfunctional Family Holiday memory was, she remembered only wanting to sit quietly and enjoy her well-earned turkey dinner, but was seated across from dear old Grandma-ma who had the disgusting habit of clacking her dentures like a PEZ dispenser. Ugh! I need more wine!

Don't have a Dysfunctional Family member? Lucky you! However, read on for easy strategies that can be applied to any event where energy stealing people aka "energy vampires" may be lurking in wait to steal your good mood.

The strategy we'll be using is a research technique from the social science field called participant observation. This strategy allows you to tolerate people you normally would have no desire to be around. In fact, you may be fascinated as you step back, detach and observe the drama unfold before you. You will be making note of all your family's quirky behavior so you can report it later to your inner circle.

Synergy Coaching's quick and easy version of the game:

Don't have time ahead of your event to involve your trusted friends in filling out bingo cards like the one below? Then make a list of at least 20 dysfunctional energy stealing comments or actions that are likely to occur at your family gathering. Make a mental note of them and when your relative "comes through" as usual mentally check off the item on your list. This will make you smile and chuckle instead of experiencing the usual energy drain, frustration, anger or embarrassment. This exercise shifts your attitude to happy observer (as you giggle inside) and turns your family get-together into a game instead of an energy stealing event.

Synergy Coaching Services

Tina Elliot, MBA, PCC – Professional Certified Coach

SAMPLE DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY BINGO CARD

Uncle Sal shows off his World War II wounds	If you just did something with your hair, you could be so pretty.	Ned chugs a fifth of bourbon after a few beers	Ross steals a pie and eats it in the bathroom	So, when are you going to get a REAL job?
Cousin Meg describes in detail her latest colonic	No, never mind, I'll do it myself.	Shelly inexplicably bursts into tears	Little Jeffery sets the house on fire	Can't we all just get along today?
Old Uncle Ted gives everyone the silent treatment	Why can't you be more like your sister?	FREE	You are such a klutz!	Sid explains the millions you can make by investing in squid farming
Sister-in-Law Hilda curses at her children and slams the door.	Sixteen-year-old Justin glowers silently all evening.	Brother Bill tells a sexist or racist joke a the dinner table	Grandpa is snoring at the table before dinner is over	No one mentions your brother is stoned as usual.
Aunt Mildred will belch non-stop at the dinner table	You're leaving so soon?	If you don't get started soon, you're never going to make me a grandma.	Well, you can't always have what you want.	Oh, don't mind me. I'm sure you're too busy.

The Comedy Club Challenge – another approach to participant observation

In this exercise, you look to your family not for love and understanding but for comedy relief and new material. Observe very closely, the more atrocious your family's behavior is the funnier it can be in the retelling. Watch stand-up comics to see the enormous fun they have describing appalling marriages, ghastly parenting, or poisonous family secrets. When you're back among your friends, telling your own wild stories, you may find that you no longer suffer from your family's brand of insanity; you've actually started to enjoy it.

Any one of these strategies can help move you from hoping for an immaculate transformation to sharing the comedy your relatives have provided in riotous conversations with your friends. They are designed to help you love your family unconditionally and thoroughly enjoy their quiriness. Playing any one of these games allow you to walk away happy, with renewed energy, lots of giggles and remain in a true holiday spirit. And that, in the end, may be the best holiday present you'll ever give to yourself and the people you cherish most.

Are you ready to leave your holiday events feeling lighter and energized? I challenge you to become a top notch participant observer. You will experience increased enjoyment during your holiday gatherings.

Synergy Coaching Services

Tina Elliot, MBA, PCC – Professional Certified Coach

A GIFT FOR YOU

On January 10th, I will select a winner for the most hilarious and quirky family get together story posted to my blog at www.synergycoaching.org/blog. You will receive a COMPLIMENTARY 90 minute life, career or business planning meeting to kick off the New Year with a bang!

Feel free to share this game with your friends. It's a gift that can only bring relief, giggles and more enjoyment to everybody's holiday gatherings.

Happy Holidays!

MY BINGO CARD

		FREE		