

The Holidays are fast approaching and many of us will be gathering around the dining table with family that we may see only once or twice a year. Often, that's where some uncomfortable conversations occur. Do you remember our Lenten study – “Return” when we discussed techniques to help facilitate healthy discussion about sometimes confrontational topics?

Let's remember to practice our **HEART principles**:

H – hear and understand me

E – even if you disagree, please don't make me wrong

A – acknowledge the greatness within me

R – remember to look for the my loving intentions

T – tell me the truth with compassion

And from Braver Angels, “Because family patterns are usually consistent and predictable, you can prepare and practice how to respond differently:”

C – Clarify: “I think your main point is ...” “Are you saying ...” “I get you are really bothered by ...” Ask real questions of understanding ... ask how they came to their view on an issue. Listen for underlying values and aspirations.

A – Agree: Try to find something ... anything you can agree with.

P – Pivot: Signal that you are about to offer a different perspective ... “This issue is important to me too, and I'd like to say where I'm coming from” or “Can I give you my thoughts on this issue?”

P – Perspective: Then give your own view with “I” statements ... “I'm concerned/worried/troubled ...” “This is how I see it ...” Be careful not to label the other person's position or attack motives. Just calmly describe your own viewpoint and how you came to it. If you have a personal story behind your view, consider sharing it.

E – Exit: Look for a good time to disengage. Settle for brief, more or less constructive exchanges the first few times you try your skills.