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# Why You Should Treat Your Family Like Strangers

IT'S ALL TOO EASY TO HAVE A SHORT FUSE WITH THE ONES WE LOVE.  
TIME TO DISARM.

By Jennifer King Lindley



**Your dad keeps giving you unsolicited career advice. He clearly thinks you are an idiot or a baby.**

Though you are old enough to have kids of your own, you still crave your parents' approval and bristle at their judgment. So even well-intentioned comments may trigger you, says Barbara Greenberg, PhD, a clinical psychologist in Fairfield County, Connecticut. Yes, you may itch to blast Dad an eye-peeling reply after he forwards you yet another LinkedIn contact. Instead, ask yourself, "Can I think of a more generous interpretation of his actions? He loves me and

tion of his actions? He loves me and is trying his best to be helpful.”

“Assuming the best intentions in others, including your family members, can save you a lot of anxiety,” says Greenberg. That doesn’t mean you have to accept his help if you don’t want it. Redirect his urge by asking for his advice in a more benign arena, she suggests: “Why do you think my car is making that weird sound?” As he peers under the hood, shower him with thanks to make him feel useful and appreciated. This mental switch is easiest when you’re practicing good self-care, says Amie Gordon, PhD, a social psychologist at



**Your adult sister takes forever to return texts and rarely initiates her own. You are crazy busy too, yet you make time to reach out.**

“With siblings, we regress. We become 12 years old again and feel the same conflicts. You may remember feeling unseen or being in her shadow,” says Greenberg. Resist shooting her a string of frown emojis. “You maybe have a vision of how you think a sister should act,” says Kim (like the idea that a good big sister should be your closest confidant). “Try to take that label off the relationship. Being more compas-