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DEEP RELATIONSHIPS. ENDURING LEGACIES.

## **Be the Adult in the Room: A Technique to Deal with Family Button Pushers**

By Joe Paul

We invite you to explore another way to handle someone with whom you are having a hard time. For instance, if you feel trapped in a negative pattern of behavior with your mother where you fall into negative reactions to her behaviors--try making a resolution. Instead of letting your presence in the room be just another episode of your old reflexive responses -- try a new approach.

Make an extra effort to be the kind son or daughter you want to be regardless of your mother's behaviors. It is hard to do this because it is such a well worn path you have walked with her for decades. Don't be surprised if she puts extra effort into pushing your buttons! If she does, take a deep breath, let your automatic reaction go by and then begin the next thing you say with a paraphrase followed by the words "Never the less....." or "In spite of that....." For example:

Mom says, " Don't tell me you are still in that God forsaken job."

You respond, "I know that you don't like my job; never the less, I love it."

She reacts with, "It is a dead end for your career"

You respond, "While you think there are no advancement possibilities for me, I am happy to say I just got a promotion in spite of that."

If you can say those phrases calmly (even compassionately) you probably won't change her behavior at all, but you will be your own person and not someone defined by automatic reactions. You will stay in adulthood instead of falling back into your worn out adolescent script with her. Most importantly, you will have greater self-respect and often this leads to changes in the relationship with the other.