


Relationship Advice: What If Your Family Doesn't Approve Of Your Partner?



 By Dr. Jane Greer

Choosing a partner for life is a big deal under any circumstances. There's enough pressure on yourself to ensure that you're making the right decision and meeting all your needs. So what happens when you come up against a thumbs down from a parent, sibling, or friend who has been weighing in on your choices all your life? Why is it that the people you love take a contrary position and see your partner completely unsuitable for you? Why can't they just welcome the people you care about with open arms? If this sounds like a familiar situation, you are not alone. This is a very common experience for many people, and it happens for a lot of reasons. It speaks to declaring your independence, freedom of choice, autonomy, and, most importantly, trusting your own judgement to know what is best for you, rather than what others think is best.

Here are some key pieces of [relationship advice](#) as you work to stay true to yourself and your commitment, without allowing conflict to tear apart your family:

It has been reported that [Selena Gomez](#)'s mother is not happy about her rekindled [celebrity relationship](#) with pop star

[Justin Bieber](#). Considering how distraught Selena was in the aftermath of their much-publicized breakup, it makes sense that her loved ones would worry about her this time around. Whatever the reasons may be, Selena's mom has assured the public that she just wants her daughter to be safe, healthy, and happy. While the approval of your parents is always a plus in any relationship, is it crucial to the success of your union? What can you do, then, if you find yourself in a similar situation?

It is important to begin with an open conversation with the person criticizing your partner. Ask them to spell out their concerns and explain why they feel the person is not right for you. This isn't always easy to do. You might start from a defensive position, (especially if this is a continuous pattern) but it is worth hearing what's on their mind because their thinking is valid and you might be missing something. Keep an open mind while you are talking and consider what they have to say. If, for example, your romantic partner exhibited bad behavior in the past and your parents call that out, think about what has changed and what is different now. You have likely allowed yourself to fully trust that person and move forward with them. Explain the changes and describe why the previous behaviors are no longer something to worry about.

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If, on the other hand, your family members or friends raise issues about a difference in race or religion, this may be a fork in the road where you choose to go your own way. It becomes a step toward independence, and a move away from the ideals of the family you grew up in. It is a time when you can take responsibility and voice your own values, even though they may differ from your parents, siblings, or friends. It can serve as an emotional emancipation and where you start to embrace what is important to you. When this happens, you acknowledge that they have criticisms, while asserting that they are not your personal beliefs.

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Whatever the case, if you continue to meet disapproval tell your loved ones that you would like them to “agree to disagree” and accept that you have clear differences of opinion in order to stay together as a family. This is also a time to put boundaries in place. Note that you are aware they don’t like your choice, but you do not want to hear anything more from them unless you specifically ask for an opinion. You can even warn that if they broach the subject, you will simply end the conversation. This will help you keep some control and prevent being blindsided.

The ultimate goal is to avoid getting into a power struggle that could make you feel controlled and judged by a parent or other loved one. It’ll also avoid lots of arguments, too! Try not to become defensive or feel you have to justify your choice. The only thing that matters is that you are happy, excited, and comfortable as you move forward with your partner with your eyes on the future. Hopefully Selena and Justin will be able to do this and find peace even with the family discord. And, in time, Selena’s mother will also come around and embrace her daughter’s rekindled romance.

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