

# ALL IN THE FAMILY

Seven tips for working successfully with family members.

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**W**e're a father-daughter team, which means that if you're running into a problem working with friends and/or family, we've been there. We understand how you can love someone...and at times want to strangle them. It happens.

Whether parents and children or spouses and siblings (with some in-laws sprinkled in for good measure), it's more common than ever to work with family today. Following these seven tried-and-true tips will help you work successfully with family members, while keeping your sanity.

## 1. ESTABLISH A CLEAR HIERARCHY

In some instances, you may be equal partners with equal decision-making power. In others, one party (or several parties) might be a minority partner(s) while the other has majority voting rights or maybe some of the parties are employees who have no final say. Determine this relationship from the get-go, and communicate any changes as they occur.

## 2. RESPECT EACH OTHER'S DIFFERENCES.

If all parties are easygoing, nothing will ever get done. If all parties are strong-willed or hot-tempered, there will always be a standstill. Opposites attract as long as you have similar work ethics, morals and goals.

## 3. SET CLEAR BOUNDARIES.

In one practice, the wife was a successful cosmetic surgeon and her husband served as the practice administrator. They had a saying between them. "You don't operate, and I don't negotiate." The couple was able to discuss any and all options, but knew that ultimately each had their own domains.

## 4. DON'T HOLD A GRUDGE.

Work issues need to be handled professionally at work,

and family feuds should be kept out of the office. If you're angry that your brother missed your birthday, your daughter didn't call her grandmother on Sunday, or your husband forgot to take out the trash, leave it at home. Your patients can sense the tension.

## 5. KEEP FAMILY TIME SACRED

It's hard to not let the day's happenings leak into dinner conversation. You may be excited about growth or a new opportunity, and that's great! But don't let your business relationship take over family time

## 6. FIGHT FAIRLY

You're going to disagree. A successful business can't grow if everyone agrees on strategies, tactics and patient care all of the time; it doesn't allow for new, fresh opinions. It's all about how you disagree. Listen closely, keep emotions out of it, and always choose a private spot for the discussion.

## 7. KNOW WHEN TO CALL IT

Not all family members were made to work together, and that's OK. Come up with a game plan in case you have to go your separate ways. If you can't make it work, it's best to sever the working relationship as soon as possible and salvage the family one. ■



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