

What is Normal?

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Recently I was talking to a friend who described holidays with her husband's large family as very "Norman Rockwell". I shook my head in agreement to which she responded, "You must know what that's like with your big family". I stopped mid bobble and said, "Not quite". I quickly changed the subject sensing that this relationship was too new to expose this very nice lady to the disorder I call family.

We (my brothers, sisters, in-laws, nieces, nephews, parents, children and husband) are not

exactly Norman Rockwell. By comparison, we belong to the Newman Rockwell family. Newman would be the less successful cousin of Norman. Instead of cozy holiday scenes this Rockwell paints the velvet pictures of dogs playing poker.

Growing up I think most of us aspire to live a “normal” life with 2.5 kids (this one always confuses me- where is the rest of that third kid?!), house with a white picket fence, and so on. And as adults this fantasy of normal becomes the metaphorical “Lombardi Trophy”. We must have it. But most of us don’t even know what normal really is. For instance, it wasn’t until I visited a friend’s house during the holidays one year that I realized not everyone’s house sounds like Grand Central Station with people shouting over each other and little insults being passed around like a bread basket. “This must be how normal families behave” I thought.

Memory takes me back to Christmas circa 1987 when my Italian grandmother was in town for her standard 3 week winter visit. Christmas morning arrived and I picked out a small box wrapped up nice and tidy from grandma. Because she was old by my standards and more cantankerous than chummy when it came to gift giving you never knew what was behind that tidy wrapping. When I unwrapped the box I found just that-an empty box. I looked a little confused and my grandmother said hastily, “What, you don’t like it?” Before I could tell her she must have made a mistake I noticed a scathing look coming in the direction of my mother and simply said “I love it”.

After becoming a mom I made it my personal mission to create the “normal” I thought we needed. The harder I tried to make holidays, birthdays, etc. perfect, the worse I felt. I fell short each and every time. I just didn’t have what it takes to pull off “normal” and this made me feel like there was something wrong with me. But maybe it wasn’t me. Maybe there is no such thing as normal when it comes to family life. And this got me to thinking. Is it normal to be normal?

My conclusion is that normal is relative. As nice as it is to be around a family where the house is always clean, birthday parties are perfection, holidays are like something out of a Norman Rockwell painting, I can’t help but feel lucky that I have the type of family where there’s no holding back.

As brutally honest as my relatives can be, they are just as loving and protective. In one of my favorite movies about a dysfunctional family, one of the main characters said, “We may not be much, but we’re all we’ve got”. That’s exactly how I feel about my family. We’re not perfectly normal but, we love each other perfectly.

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Telling Tales

Angel Kane and Becky Andrews live in Wilson County. This is their story (or tale) about their life, families and times that they share. Besides their weekly column Telling Tales Angel and Becky Co Founded Wilson Living Magazine. The idea of developing a magazine for Wilson County first came to Becky and Angel one afternoon while they sat on her back porch watching their children play in the backyard.

They were discussing the outpouring of emails, calls and responses to their column “Telling Tales” and wanted to find a way to capture that community spirit. People were stopping them wherever they went to share their own “tales.” They suddenly realized everyone has a story to tell and many of these stories were amazing. And in that moment, Wilson Living Magazine came to life. Be sure to check out Wilson Living Magazine at www.wilsonlivingmagazine.com

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