



# ASPEN FAMILY BUSINESS GROUP, LLC

---

DEEP RELATIONSHIPS. ENDURING LEGACIES.

There's no Sadder Thing Than What Might have Been

by Leslie Dashew

As we enter the season of holidays, one underlying theme is the connection to family and people whom we love. For those of us who are fortunate to be spending time with family members we enjoy and embrace, it is a time of fun, good food and cheer.

For those who have lost someone this year, as we lost our dear friend and partner, Sam Lane, we reflect on our loss and the missing person at our table. We think of what that person would have brought to our holidays and perhaps chuckle and feel the pain of the missing smile, joke or special dish that he or she always made.

For those who experience some conflict, resentments and hurts in the family, this can be a very difficult time as well. Our ideal holiday season is diminished by the tension we expect to encounter or the lack of a holiday celebration with those who are our relatives. There is an expectation of spending holiday time with relatives in most cultures and when that doesn't happen, our loss is brought to us with every holiday song, advertisement or date on the calendar that approaches that day.

Then there is the New Year: a time of resetting the calendar to a year and a fresh page, perhaps a new beginning with new resolutions! This is also a time when we look around and see who is there with us as we end one year and begin another. It is often a time of reflection on our goals and plans and setting intentions for the coming year. As we have said in our new book, *The Keys to Family Business Success*, planning is key to increasing the odds that our dreams will become reality. The clarity of vision that we develop for ourselves, our family and our business allows us to move forward, leading the way into the New Year, engaging the support of others.

Taking this opportunity to think about what you want in your life during the holidays and in the New Year is an important step to creating the life you want to lead. So often when we have experienced a loss or a conflict, we feel victimized

and unable to change the impact. The gift you can give yourself (and perhaps others in the family) is to rethink that assumption and consider what you can do to lead your life toward one that is more fulfilling.

Reaching out to those who have hurt you with forgiveness, seeking those whom you have missed to rejoin you, inviting a new acquaintance to become closer are all steps that take courage and can lead to a more fulfilling holiday season. (See Joe Paul's note on one technique to do this).

The other choice may cause regret. Many years ago I heard someone say, "There's no sadder thing than what might have been." This is a reminder that we never know how much time we have with someone...or even how much time we ourselves have left.

My partners and I wish you courage, love and forgiveness as you move into the often challenging and fulfilling days of December and great fulfillment in the year ahead.

#### Side Bar

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.