



# I Only Say This Because I Love You: How the Way We Talk Can Make or Break Family Relationships Throughout Our Lives

*Deborah Tannen*

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## **I Only Say This Because I Love You: How the Way We Talk Can Make or Break Family Relationships Throughout Our Lives** Deborah Tannen

Why does talk in families so often go in circles, leaving us tied up in knots? In this illuminating book, Deborah Tannen, the linguist and bestselling author of **You Just Don't Understand** and many other books, reveals why talking to family members is so often painful and problematic even when we're all adults. Searching for signs of acceptance and belonging, we find signs of disapproval and rejection. Why do the seeds of family love so often yield a harvest of criticism and judgment? In **I Only Say This Because I Love You**, Tannen shows how important it is, in family talk, to learn to separate word meanings, or messages, from heart meanings, or metamessages — unstated but powerful meanings that come from the history of our relationships and the way things are said. Presenting real conversations from people's lives, Tannen reveals what is actually going on in family talk, including how family conversations must balance the longing for connection with the desire for control, as we struggle to be close without giving up our freedom.

This eye-opening book explains why grown women so often feel criticized by their mothers; and why mothers feel they can't open their mouths around their grown daughters; why growing up male or female, or as an older or younger sibling, results in different experiences of family that persist throughout our lives; and much, much more. By helping us to understand and redefine family talk, Tannen provides the tools to improve relationships with family members of every age.



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