

Establish Strong Family Ties...

Now it's time to talk about your in-laws.

You see, when you married your spouse, you married everything about them – including their family. In a marriage, you can't just decide to accept the things you like. Sometimes you have to deal with difficult baggage too. You don't have to like your mate's family, but you do have to love them and make the best of the situation. Don't enter into your marriage or your courtship expecting to dislike your in-laws. If you go in with this kind of an attitude, it's bound to become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Whereas your husband or wife was able to choose you as their spouse, they didn't have that same choice when it comes to their family. You are a part of your family until the day you die and so is he. And chances are - no matter how weird, wild, rude or bizarre their family may be - they love them. You've got to learn to too.

Despite all of the mother- and father-in-law jokes and horror stories you've heard, learning to love and accept your in-laws really isn't that hard. You'll just have to work at it. Get to know your mother-in-law. Relish the stories and the memories she has from the days before you entered the picture. Spend time talking with your father-in-law. Listen to his war stories, tales of his glory days and his insights about the secrets of life. Get together with your mate's brothers and sisters. Savor the opportunity to watch them laugh and joke and give each other a hard time. If you start out by trying to be respectful, caring and entertaining, you'll soon find that not only have you found a wonderful new husband, you've also inherited a wonderful new family.

Even if you and your partner live hundreds or thousands of miles away from your in-laws, make a real effort to connect with them. Send cards. Call them on the phone. Make it a point to get together for the holidays. One day, your mother-in-law will be your children's grandmother. Your father-in-law will be their grandpa. Your brothers- and sisters-in-law will become aunts and uncles. Each of them will have important roles to play in the life of *your* family. That's because they are your family.

Far too many marriages suffer because of strained relationships with relatives and in-laws. That doesn't have to be the case in your marriage. By simply taking the time out to get to know your in-laws and to learn to love them, you'll astronomically increase the chance that your own marriage will be a success. Take the chance to prove that all of those in-law jokes were wrong.

If you can actually learn to accept and be accepted by your mate's family, you'll be the envy of just about every other couple in the world!

Kathy Stafford, Relationship Coach

"I show singles how to get married and couples how to STAY married"

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