

Welcome to the Family: Getting Along with In-Laws and the Extended Family



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Agenda

- What causes conflict (survey)
- Why is it important to get along?
- 5 Practices
- Managing daily interactions and setting boundaries
- Managing truly difficult relationships

Sileh Rahmi

• وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُونَ سُوءَ الْحِسَابِ •

• [13:21] And those who join that which Allah has bidden to be joined and have awe of their Lord and fear the evil reckoning.

• وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً وَيَذَرُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ •

• [13:22] And those who are constant, seeking the pleasure of their Lord, and keep up prayer and spend (benevolently) out of what We have given them secretly and openly and repel evil with good; as for those, they shall have the (happy) issue of the abode

Reflection on this ayat

- Proactive
- Steadiness (vs fickleness)
- Focus on self
- Driven by principles rather than feelings
- Material generosity and generosity of spirit

Why is it sometimes difficult to get along with in-laws

- Expectations, personal and societal
- Loyalty to one's own family
- Love, vulnerability and hurt
- The emotional bank account
- When the account is very low, we have “emotional baggage”

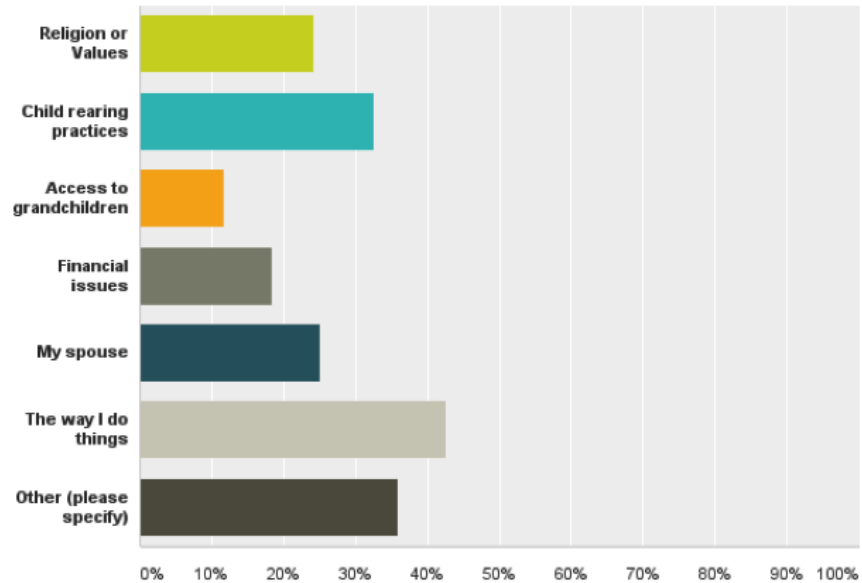
Emotional baggage

- Is based on our unmet expectations and history with that person.
- Happens when we bring the past into the present
- Every interactions is seen through that lens
- Is based on our interpretation of the situation
- Prevents us from seeing clearly
- Impact our health
- Results in agitation, incomplete relationships

Sources of conflict

Q8 Which of the following cause conflict in your relationship with your in laws? (Check all that apply.)

Answered: 120 Skipped: 41



Other sources

- Lack of perceived support
- How much time spent with each family

Why is it important to get along?

- The big picture – who is the beneficiary?
- Relationships as self growth
- A battle with no winners
- The true victims

5 Practices for getting along

1. Self awareness

- Models of the world
- Making space for difference while honoring your authenticity and values
- Acknowledging feelings and acting on choice
- Meditation on love

2. Self Control

- Living according to values rather than by triggers
- Choosing kindness
- Responsibility of the one more highly evolved

3. Perspective Taking

- Walking a mile . . .
- What your MIL wants to tell you . . .

What your MIL wants to tell you . . .

- Hurts to be downsized
- This relationship is hard for me too . .
- My grandchildren are your ultimate leverage
- You want it both ways, support but no advice
- Appreciation would be nice
- I know a thing or two . . .

What your DIL wants to tell you . . .

- Your opinion matters a lot
- I fear that I will not measure up
- I want to be number one in his life
- If you had it hard, please don't take it out on me, times are different now
- I need your love and acceptance

4. Appreciation

- The magic formula
- Working with strengths
- Choosing your focus/directing your attention

5. Forbearance and forgiveness

Day to day interactions

- Exposure effect – familiarity breeds love?
- Act the way you want to feel (feelings follow actions)
- Avoid bickering about pointless issues – food, religion, politics
- Act according to your own values, accept yourself, others will accept you

Day to day interactions

- Grandparent privilege. Research about advice
- Parent privilege
- Be flexible and respect others' priorities
- The big picture – think of the link that you love
- Focus on the positive

Setting boundaries

- I know you are trying to help
- I appreciate what you are doing
- I am really glad that Ali has loving grandparents
- Thank you
- What was Abbas like as a child?
- Getting the big guns of research out

Dealing with difficult people

- When you are dealing with truly difficult people, there are steps and stages you can go through
- 1. Being proactive
- 2. Healthy assertiveness
- 3. Minimizing damage

1. Repelling evil with good

- **[41:34]** And not alike are the good and the evil. Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! he between whom and you was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend.

Responding instead of reacting

- When one person in an adversarial relationship takes responsibility for relating differently, the entire dynamic of the relationship changes, even if the other person is completely unwilling to engage in this way
- Jon Kabat-Zinn

Responding instead of reacting

- If you knew it was in the best interests of your friend to maintain a difficult relationship, and she came to you with this story, what would you tell her?

Being proactive

- The power of appreciation

2. Speaking up - healthy assertiveness

- Know your aims; stay focused on the prize; lose battles to win wars
- Is grounded in empathy, compassion, and love (not EGO)
- Communicate for yourself, not to change others
- “Qawlan Sadid”
- Focus mainly on “from now on”
- Make clear plans, agreements

2. Speaking up - healthy assertiveness

- NVC: When X happens, I feel Y because I need Z.
- Focus on self rather than blame the other
- Owning the problem

Why taking the high road is a good thing (practicing unilateral virtue)

- The bliss of blamelessness
- Amr bil maruf by example
- Being happy vs being right
- Spiritual growth
- Self esteem
- Chasing peace
- Accessing Mercy

You have done all this and nothing
changes
You are dealing with an actual trouble
maker
Then what?

3. Minimize Damage

- Protect your nuclear family through clear communication
- Find ways to maintain relationship while protecting family
 - Grounding yourself
 - Meeting in groups (forces to be on good behaviour)
 - Taking the first step (home ground advantage)
 - Appreciation (disarming)

Questions and Comments

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