

Blog

BRIDES

Common Family Obstacles Couples Face the First Year of Marriage

MOMS, RELATIONSHIPS
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Photo: Getty Images

We are family! Like it or not, when you said, "I do" to your man you also said, "I do" to his mom, sister and the entire clan. Learning how to navigate those relationships and balance your own needs as newlyweds verse those of both your respective families' can be quite tricky and frankly overwhelming, particularly in the first year of marriage. With a little guidance and a lot of compromise, you can all be one big happy family though.

Splitting the holidays

His mom is dying to have you for Thanksgiving, but you've never missed a major holiday with your parents. Before you know it, it's all out war. Yikes! "It's like whoever gets you wins, and competition between your family and his ensues," explains relationship expert and author April Masini. The best way to offset jealousy and territorial in-laws, according to her, is to make a pre-emptive strike. "As a united front, come up with a plan and tell both sets of parents how you'll handle the holidays, whether it's hosting everyone yourself, switching off years or doing your own thing as a couple that first Thanksgiving."

Setting boundaries

This is a big one and an absolute must for newlyweds, especially if your families reside in the same city as you do, stresses Masini. For example, let's say you're accustomed to relatives calling before coming by, and your in-laws live by the open door policy so they just drop by whenever and don't knock because they feel that's not what family does. Well, "You may have problems acclimating to the culture clash." To clear the air, Masini recommends asking politely, but firmly, and with good nature if the family that doesn't call first would be kind enough to do so in the future. "Explain that you love seeing them and would love it even more if you had a little heads up the next time around. They may not realize this and there may be an adjustment period, however with consistency and warmth, you'll eventually get your point across," she says.

See More: [Do You Have to Invite Unsupportive Family Members to Your Same-Sex Wedding?](#)

Finances

More money, more problems...ain't that the truth! Nowadays, it's not uncommon for newlyweds to receive a large sum of money from parents for a down payment on a new home or simply as a generous wedding gift. If you're one of the lucky few, you're probably wondering what, if any, invisible strings are attached, notes Masini. "Will you have to give your in-laws a key to the house? Display their photos prominently on the mantle piece? Name your children after them?" First of all, if you have mostly pleasant dealings with your in-laws or parents who are giving you this gift, accept it, as it's great for you and makes them feel good to contribute, she points out.

On the other hand, if you suspect his parents have an ulterior motive and are using the kind gesture as a way to leverage themselves in your lives, you may want to think twice about accepting. "Discuss this with your spouse in a way that isn't insulting," advises Masini. "Be honest and direct, but don't denigrate or speak ill of his family." Even throw in some compliments so as not to offend. Most importantly though, communicate! Anticipate the downside of the gift, and discuss ways to handle what may come, she suggests. "Remember, your marriage isn't just a transition for the two of you, it's an opportunity for the entire family on both sides of the marriage to recreate relationships and improve existing ones!"

KEYWORDS:
Mother In Law Relationships

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