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## 5 Major Mother-in-Law Missteps You Don't Want to Make

MOMS

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Photo: Getty Images

Whether you hit the mother-in-law jackpot or a proverbial land mine, you want to put your best foot forward whenever you're with your spouse's mother. Not only did she raise the man or woman you love, but "she will be at all of your future Thanksgivings, family events, and children's birthday parties," points out April Masini, relationship expert and advice columnist. "For that reason alone, you should work on a good relationship with her."

So to start out on a good note — and maintain a positive relationship for the long run — here are five major mother-in-law missteps you need to avoid.

### 1. Treating her like an annoyance.

Says Ruth Nemzoff, Ph.D., parenting expert and author of *Don't Roll Your Eyes: Making In-Laws Into Family*, you should treat your mother-in-law just as you would any other new acquaintance with whom you want to build a relationship. "Just as you wouldn't yell and scream at a new friend or coworker," she says, "you should not do so with any of your new family members until you've established genuine caring and respect."

### 2. Forgetting her photo on your gallery wall.

The easiest way to make your mother-in-law feel like she's no longer part of your spouse's family is to keep her — and her likeness! — out of your home, Masini says. "Make sure you have as many photos of his side of the family as your own side of the family," she says. "If you don't, she's going to feel slighted, and she may begin to feel threatened by your side of the family. This is how family feuds start — with the absence of a single photo image!"

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### 3. Assuming you to want the same things for your relationship.

Just because you want to be best friends with your new mother-in-law doesn't mean she's ready to commit to that kind of closeness, Nemzoff points out. Instead, "let the relationship develop by gradually getting to know each other, by sharing interests, and by helping, just as you would with a friend," she advises.

### 4. Outshining her every move.

She can make *mean* mashed potatoes, but yours are better, you tell your spouse. You may be right, but "let her win a few," suggests Masini. "Throwing a few games and letting her pie taste better, or her dress look more stylish, is a cheap and easy way to make her feel good about herself and you. When she feels there's competition between you, she'll feel demoted at worst, and competitive and nasty at best. Neither one of those positions is a good one!"

### 5. Thinking her way is the wrong way.

As they say, there are two sides to every story, and Nemzoff says discounting your mother-in-law's viewpoint as incorrect simply because it differs from yours is a serious mistake. "Instead, give your mother-in-law the benefit of the doubt and try to discover why she views the situation differently from the way you do," she says. "Remember, you don't always have to follow her advice, but you can ask for her opinion."

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