

About Toxic In-laws, part 1

I've been working on a book for a while now about toxic/narcissistic in-laws. I'm struggling to write it for a few reasons. I've been really distracted by things going on in my life since I started this book 2 years ago. I also felt that I needed to put it on the back burner to write other books. The topic is such a hard one for me to write about too, because I honestly have been through hell because of some of my husband's family, & I'm still healing. These issues make this one tough book to write. That being said, I believe the topic is an important one so I will finish it. It just may take some time. I hope by the time this video airs, the book will be finished. You can see it when it's available on my website at www.CynthiaBaileyRug.com

Since my book has been delayed, here is a post to help identify whether or not your in-laws are toxic. I will speak from the perspective of a daughter in-law with a toxic mother in-law, since that is the bulk of my experience as well as the bulk of the experiences of people I've spoken with. The information is also good for sons in-law or toxic sisters in-law, fathers in-law, etc. though.

Does your mother in-law ignore you? The purpose of this behavior is to show you that you mean nothing to her.

Does she refuse to accept responsibility for treating you badly? Rather than say something like, "I shouldn't have said that.. I'm sorry," does she make excuses for her words or actions or deny them completely? This is a big red flag. Functional people accept responsibility for what they say & do.

Does your mother in-law have a different personality depending on whether or not you are alone with her or others are around? Another big red flag! Any abuser will behave differently to their victim depending on whether or not there are witnesses. They want to hide their abuse from other people.

Does she expect you to be blindly devoted to her family, even to the point of rejecting your own family & friends? Many toxic mothers in-law remind me of the Borg from the tv show "Star Trek: The Next Generation." They expect their son's or daughter's new spouse to become completely enmeshed in their new in-law family.

Like the Borg, many toxic mothers in-law expect their new sons or daughters in-law to adapt to their opinions, religion, way of life, etc. Individuality is highly discouraged by toxic mothers in-law. I once told my late mother in-law I hate to cook. I do it, but hate it. For Christmas a few months later, she & her 2 daughters gave me nothing but cookbooks, utensils, food & other cooking paraphernalia.

Does your mother in-law show you no respect? Toxic in-laws show no respect for personal space, choices, likes/dislikes, parenting, & even boundaries.

Does your mother in-law makes it clear to you that she doesn't like you? Unless you abuse your mother in-law's adult child or your children, if your mother in-law had any respect whatsoever for her child, she would be civil to you no matter how much she disliked you. The inability to be civil even only for the sake of her adult child proves she is toxic.

Is she manipulative & controlling? Toxic people, in particular narcissists, must be in charge. Chances are, your mother in-law controls her spouse & children. Since you married one of her children, she expects you to be as control-able & easily manipulated as everyone else. When you say no, she is NOT happy.

Is your toxic mother in-law is nice to you, but it's short lived & in front of others only? Very few people are cruel 100% of the time. Toxic people bring out their nice side when it can be advantageous to them. Being nice sometimes will make their victim want to see it more, so they work harder to please the toxic person. Also, being nice to a victim in front of others helps the toxic person prove to others that if you complain about the relationship, you are obviously the problem.

About Toxic In-laws, part 2

Mothers in-law like I described in last week's video care nothing of their adult child beyond what he can do for her. They clearly have no respect for him either, since they treat the person he chose to spend his life with so badly. His marriage is nothing more to this kind of mother than an embarrassment, & she would like it simply to go away. Since she can't file for divorce on his behalf, she becomes extremely destructive to the adult child's marriage with her abusive ways.

Your spouse no doubt suffers greatly from his mother's abusive behavior, yet tolerates it anyway. This is because he is accustomed to how his mother behaves. This is his norm & many adults in this situation have accepted this as their permanent reality. By complaining about his mother's behavior or even confronting her, this threatens his norm. Facing the truth can be incredibly painful for many in this position, which is why many refuse to face the truth. This feeling is known as cognitive dissonance. Rather than face this miserable feeling, many people in this situation will do their best to shut down their spouse. They don't want to hear about the bad things their mother is doing, so they will tell their wife they don't believe her, she is over sensitive, she just doesn't understand Mom, that's her problem so she needs to leave him out of it & more. They refuse to confront their mother on behalf of their wife. Naturally, the wife in this position feels rejected, unloved & hurt. She wants to fight for her marriage, but it seems whatever she does is wrong, & whatever his mother does is right. Her trying to save her marriage only causes more problems. The reason for this is she doesn't know that when you're dealing with a narcissist, normal ways to cope don't work.

For anyone in this position, you need to think of this situation more like a game of strategy than a relationship.

As always pray. Ask God to help you to know what to do & to give you whatever you need to enable you to do it. Pray for your husband to see the truth & for God to enable him to be able to cope with it, too.

Cope with your emotions as best you can by journaling, talking to a safe friend, pray.. whatever works for you. Whatever you do, don't hold in your emotions!

Don't focus on your mother in-law's bad behavior when it can be avoided. Instead, focus on being the loving wife that you are. Don't neglect to remind your husband how much you love him. If he complains about his mother to you for any reason, don't join in. Listen quietly to him & give him objective advice if he asks for it. The reason being, the mindset of many people in this situation is they can complain about Mom, but if anyone else does, they jump to her defense. This would only cause more problems in your marriage.

Along those lines, if you discuss his mother's behavior with him, stay calm. State your issues in a matter of fact way, lacking emotion. If you rant & rave, that too will make

him feel he must defend his mother, which only will hurt you & possibly your marriage.

Limit your exposure to your mother in-law as much as possible, but especially alone. No narcissist wants to abuse their victim in front of the person they want to think well of them, so stay glued to your husband's side as much as possible.

Keep your emotions in check around your mother in-law. Narcissists love to twist a victim's normal reaction around to prove how mentally unstable or even abusive the victim is to other people. In her presence, stay calm. Vent later when you're away from her as needed though, so you don't hold in all the bad emotions.

Having to deal with toxic, narcissistic in-laws is tough. I know, I've been there. But, with prayer, love, patience & wisdom, you can survive it with your marriage in tact.