

Narcissistic In-Laws

Today's podcast is about narcissistic in-laws.

For simplicity sake, I'm going to refer to the victim as he & the spouse as she, but the roles easily could be reversed.

When you are married to someone with narcissistic family members, your life is full of challenges. Narcissistic families expect their chosen victim to do as they want, which includes marrying only someone of whom they approve. When that doesn't happen, that victim & spouse's life becomes incredibly challenging.

One common problem in these situations is when the victim doesn't recognize the level of dysfunction in the family. He may recognize that his family can be difficult or bossy, but doesn't see them as cruel or manipulative. She however, recognizes the depths of the situation. When she tries to say anything about his family, he becomes defensive. She gets frustrated, he gets frustrated, an argument happens & nothing gets resolved.

This scenario is very common, & easily can result in divorce if handled the wrong way.

As tempting as it can be for you if you see the situation clearly, giving an ultimatum is never a good idea! The one who gives the ultimatum usually ends up on the losing end. The person receiving the ultimatum feels unfairly pressured & manipulated. On the rare chance the one receiving it goes along with it, he will end up feeling resentful over time.

When you feel you must mention the situation, do so calmly & as non-accusatory as humanly possible. Anger will make your spouse defensive because he'll feel as if you're attacking him & his family. Try to remain calm & leave emotion out of the situation as much as possible. Men respond better to logic than emotions, & in this case may feel as if the emotions are less about emotions & more of an attempt at manipulation. Women in these situations may respond to calmly expressed emotions, however, such as, "I feel like your mom tries to interfere too much in our marriage. It makes me really uncomfortable."

Have your own boundaries firmly in place as much as possible with your in-laws. Don't let them manipulate you or push you around. Remain calm when setting those boundaries, so if your spouse sees this happen, he can't say you were mean or unreasonable. Hopefully, your narcissistic in-law will be angry however, & your spouse will see their irrational behavior.

There may be a time when you have to go no contact with your narcissistic in-laws. This is going to cause problems in your marriage. A person still under the spell of their narcissistic family won't understand no contact. If you firmly believe no contact is the best solution in your situation, calmly explain to your spouse that this isn't you

trying to manipulate him or come between him & his family. Instead, this is what you feel is best for you to do.

Always remember not to have expectations of your spouse where his family is concerned. Expectations put pressure on him & make his situation even more difficult. Also, he may resent them, no matter how reasonable they are, which means he will resent you. This will push him closer to his family & make him pull away from you.

Try to be patient & understanding of the situation. This is hard, I know, but if you too had a narcissistic family, you understand how hard it is to be under their influence before recognizing what they really are.

At some point, he is going to get frustrated or angry with his family & need to talk about it. When this happens, do NOT say anything like, "I told you so!" or, "I always knew she was like that." Listen quietly while offering your support. If he asks for advice, give it without being critical.

Don't forget to take care of yourself in this situation, too. Write in your journal. Talk to supportive friends or family who understand your situation for what it really is.

Last but certainly not least, never ever forget to pray about your situation! Let God show you how best to handle things with your spouse & in-laws as well as how to take care of your own mental health. His help is truly invaluable!

Thank you for listening to my podcast!