

## Life With An Enmeshed Spouse

Today's podcast is about life with an enmeshed spouse.

Being with someone who is enmeshed with their family is a miserable experience. Their family always comes before you, no matter what. This means that if you are sick & so is your spouse's parent, the parent will be the one to receive your spouse's attention & help, even if their illness isn't serious & yours is. If you have plans for a romantic anniversary next Saturday but your in-laws want a ceiling fan installed, that fan gets installed before you can spend time together.

When a person's spouse is part of an enmeshed family, their family takes up almost all the space in the relationship. This is not only ungodly, unbiblical & it's dangerous to your marriage. Toxic in-laws & dysfunctional spouses who refuse to see the situation for what it is are responsible for a lot of divorces. A quick internet search I did suggested 20-28% of divorces are due to in-law problems.

One of the saddest problems of having an enmeshed spouse is how you shrink yourself. You learn quickly that your in-laws always come first over you, & that asking your spouse to do things for or with you burdens them &/or starts an argument. Shrinking yourself is a natural side effect of this lifestyle. You stop complaining because it doesn't help. Your spouse soon realizes that you won't ask them to do things for or with you often, so they have more time to do whatever they want for their enmeshed family. They also feel validated for their behavior being ok, because you stopped complaining. You also love your spouse so you naturally have no desire to burden them further. They already have more than enough to do, what with catering to their demanding family, & it's very obvious that isn't going to change. Rather than put more on them, it's only natural to avoid asking your spouse for things & taking care of everything yourself. Sadly this well meaning gesture makes a person shrink more & more until they are a shell of their former self.

Shrinking yourself means losing sight of the pretty wonderful things.

You lose sight of the realization that your life is yours, & no one else should have such power over it. Your spouse may want to sacrifice his or her life for them, but you don't have to.

You lose sight of the fact that you have every right to have needs, & expect your spouse to meet some of those needs. You aren't wrong, selfish or demanding for wanting to spend time with your spouse or expecting this person to keep you as their top priority.

You lose sight of yourself, & all the wonderful things that make you, you. You, in fact, lose yourself. By trying so hard to be a good spouse by not adding any further responsibilities to your spouse, you shrink yourself so much that you are no longer you. I know, I have done this! I also can tell you that it's no way to live. God made

you as He did for valid reasons. Don't let that special, wonderful person He made go any longer! Get that person back! It will take time & effort, but you can do it with His help!

Also remember, you can't change your spouse. They have to want to change & put forth the effort to make healthy changes. You can set the stage for them to change by having healthy boundaries & giving reasonable consequences for their behavior, but whether or not they change is up to them, not you. What is up to you is deciding whether or not you are willing to live this way, & if you want to stay with your spouse.

Lastly never forget that you deserve to be treated with love, respect, & courtesy by your spouse. Wanting such things doesn't make you demanding, badgering or even "too much." It makes you a human being aware of what they deserve.

Thank you for listening to my podcast!