

When Enmeshed Families Try To Absorb A New Spouse

Today's podcast is about when enmeshed families try to absorb a new spouse.

When someone marries into an enmeshed family, the family does not view the new spouse as a separate person joining the system. They view them as something to be absorbed. Assimilated. Claimed. The goal is not relationship, but assimilation. The new spouse is expected to abandon their own family & friends to become part of the family's emotional machinery, reinforcing existing loyalties & power structures rather than forming a distinct marital unit.

Enmeshed families are driven by narcissistic dynamics. Narcissists do not see people as individuals with autonomy, history, & independent relationships. They see people as tools, sources of validation, compliance, labor, emotional supply, or leverage. When a new person enters the family through marriage, they are not welcomed warmly. They are evaluated for usefulness.

The new spouse becomes a part of the family identity. If you know anything about the Borg from "Star Trek: The Next Generation" you know what I mean. Their thoughts, preferences, loyalties, & time are expected to align with the family, or The Collective. Resistance is viewed as disrespect. Privacy as secrecy. Boundaries as rejection. The underlying assumption is simple: You belong to us now.

This is why enmeshed families react with hostility toward the new spouse's existing relationships. Their family is seen as competition. Their friends are seen as outside influence, & their support systems as threats. Anything that pulls the new spouse out of the enmeshed orbit weakens the family's control, & is unacceptable.

In many cases, the rejection is overt. Invitations stop. Coldness appears. The spouse's family & friends are criticized, minimized, or erased. In other cases, the rejection is masked as concern, protection, or affection. The message remains the same: Your primary loyalty should be here.

Sometimes the behavior looks caring on the surface. After an argument with my own mother, my mother-in-law hugged me & said, "Don't worry! I'm your mom now!" To outsiders, it may have sounded comforting. To someone who understands enmeshment, it was a quiet attempt to pull me away from my own family & reposition herself as my primary emotional authority. That was not love. Love does not erase or replace. Love does not demand transfer of identity.

Healthy families understand that marriage creates a new household without destroying the old ones. Enmeshed families see marriage as an acquisition. They do not honor the new marital bond unless it benefits them. If it does not, they attempt to undermine it by pulling one spouse back into the family system or by absorbing the other spouse into it.

Scripture addresses this issue. Genesis 2:24 in the Amplified Bible says, ***"For this reason a man shall leave his father & his mother & shall be joined to his wife, & the two shall***

become one flesh". Leaving does not mean abandoning parents. It means shifting allegiance. Enmeshed families reject this because it removes their central position.

When a new spouse resists absorption, backlash is inevitable. They are labeled controlling, divisive, disrespectful, or ungrateful. The real offense is independence. Enmeshed narcissists cannot tolerate people who cannot be controlled.

This is why firm boundaries are not optional for a new spouse. They are necessary. Boundaries around time, emotional access, decision making, & loyalty must be clear. Equally important, if the enmeshed partner does not recognize the enmeshment as a problem, boundaries may need to be placed with the spouse as well. Silence & minimization enable the system.

There is no healthy reason anyone should abandon their family or friends for in-laws. None. Demands for exclusive loyalty are not signs of closeness, but signs of narcissism & insecurity. Proverbs 29:25 says, ***"The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in & relies on the Lord shall be safe"***.

In-laws who require emotional surrender are not acting in love, but in fear. & fear driven systems will always try to consume what they cannot control.

Thank you for listening to my podcast!