

how to have

conversations

with your in-laws

A GUIDE FOR NAVIGATING DIFFICULT TOPICS



Have you ever...

...had a full, in-depth conversation with your in-laws, thought you were totally on the same page, and then figured out the hard way you definitely were not? Or have your in-laws ever totally ignored your boundaries? Complained about the rules you've set in place? Talked about you behind your back?

Yeah, we've been there too. All married people have in-laws (whether we want them or not), but we don't all have the same types of relationships with our in-laws. Don't worry; no matter the state of the relationship now, you can improve and ace your relationship with your in-laws.

First, Let's Check In

Now, before you can have a productive conversation with your in-laws, let's focus on you. You've got to have some personal boundaries and guidelines in place if you want to keep things from getting out of hand.

Do a self-check-up. Take a long look at yourself to pinpoint what exactly is going on and what needs to happen. Think about these questions:

- ◆ *Am I relating to my in-laws based on how my family operated?*
- ◆ *Why is their behavior bothering me?*
- ◆ *Have I ever shared with my spouse that this bothers me?*

Next, have a check-in with your spouse. Remember, it's their family, and they may not be too excited about having difficult conversations. Speak about your in-law's behavior, not the individual. Avoid "You" statements so that you don't accuse anyone. Instead, focus on "I" statements such as "I feel."

Navigating Tough Topics

Always approach tough topics together with your spouse.

It might be tempting to react to your in-laws in the moment. But 99% of the time, it's critical that you and your spouse are on the same page and approach your in-laws together.

Determine who is going to talk.

It may be better for your spouse to address their parents. You don't want to put a wedge between their relationship or give your in-laws cause to hold a grudge against you.

Listen.

It's essential to really listen to what they have to say, instead of thinking about your response while they're talking.

Give grace.

This may be their first time being in-laws. There are no rule books on how to be an in-law. Focus on the positive.

Don't be afraid to get it out in the open.

Not addressing issues only makes them more prominent. Being open and honest with your in-laws gives them the chance to meet your expectations.

The Must-Have Convos

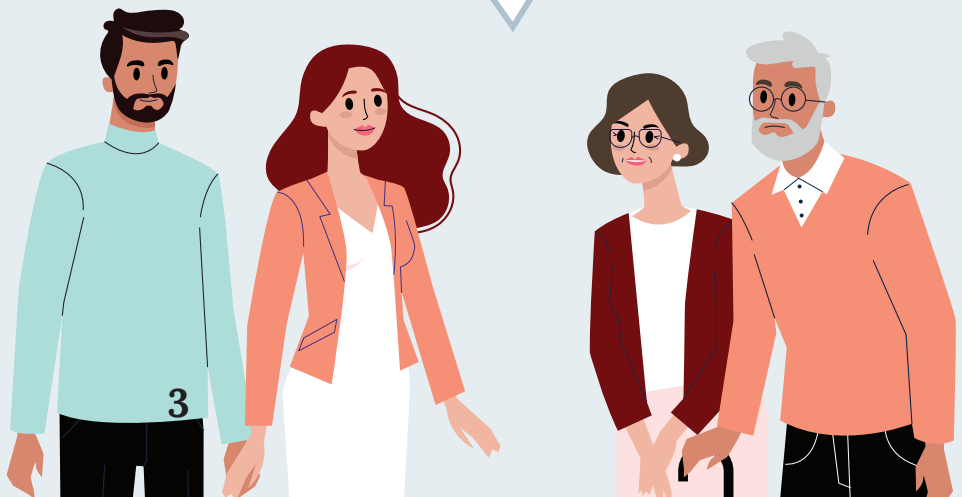
You've probably already come across topics that require a conversation with your in-laws. Maybe you've already had these, maybe not. **Here are a few common conversations that need to happen with your in-laws (and your parents, 'cause remember they're in-laws too).**

Dropping In Unexpectedly

Depending on your proximity to your in-laws, dropping in unexpectedly can be an issue. This can be a source of frustration when you have plans or they seem to drop by whenever they feel it is best. This can also be tough on kids' schedules. **Here's how to start the conversation:**

SAY

We love that we can spend time together and the kids can see you often. We would like to work out a schedule to get together each week. We are working hard to keep them as close to their schedules as possible, but we want to make sure they have plenty of time with their grandparents.



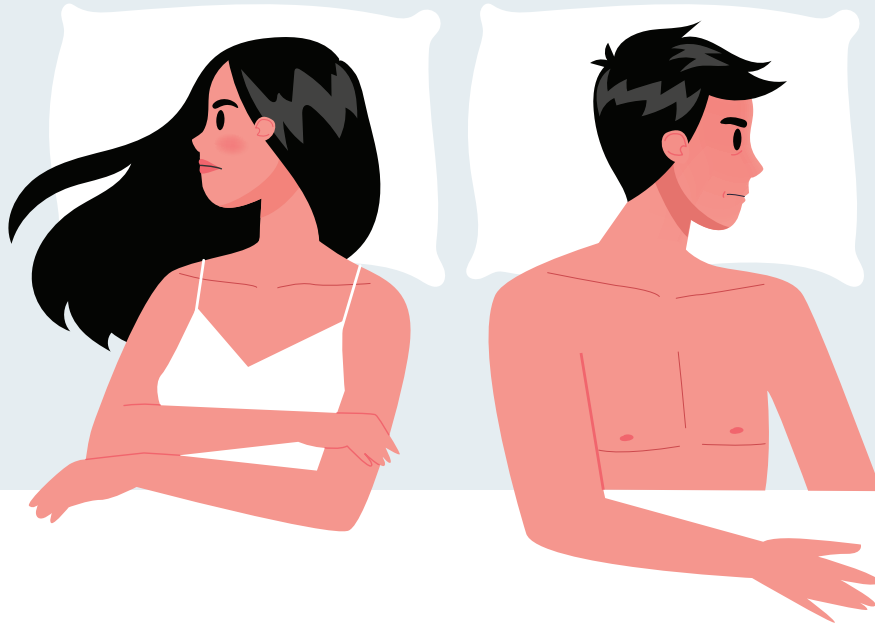
Raising The Kids

Your in-laws are also parents. They have raised at least one child successfully (I'd call your spouse a success). Understandably, they want to impart their experience to you. But you recognize the world has changed since they were parents, and there are new issues to navigate with your kids. **Here's how to start the conversation:**

SAY

It is such a pleasure to have you involved in your grandkids' lives. My grandparents meant so much to me growing up. I appreciate all you do for our family. As you know, a lot has changed since we were kids. We face different issues as we raise our kids. We would appreciate it if you would support our decisions regarding raising our kids. We are open to your advice but would appreciate your support of our decisions.





They're Driving A Wedge Between You and Your Spouse

Your family and your spouse's family are your first relationships. Parents can be very protective of their children even as they become adults. If your in-laws are causing division in your marriage, a conversation is definitely needed. Remember, first talk to your spouse and make sure you're on the same page about their parents' involvement in your relationship. **Here's how to start the conversation:**

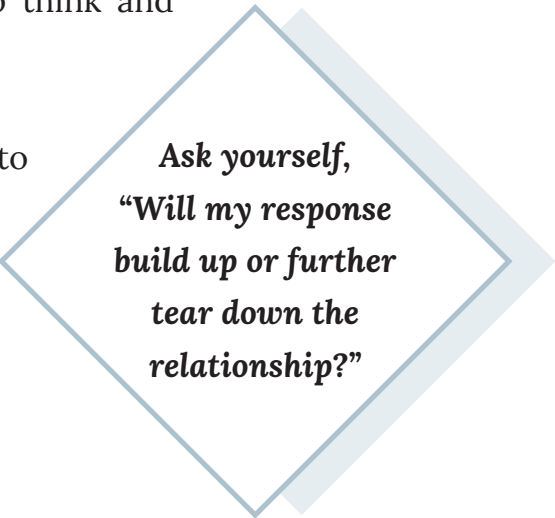
SAY

We appreciate your marriage advice. We know we have a lot to learn. We would appreciate it, though, if you did not criticize either of us. Our marriage is our most important relationship, and we want to create a healthy, safe environment for our kids. We are on the same page with each other and would love it if you'd respect our decisions and our privacy. We want you involved in our lives, but we do need to protect our relationship.

Give Me A Break

Anytime you have a challenging conversation, things can get dicey. Before you launch into any hard discussions, make a commitment to **respond versus react**. Every time you react to a situation, you are giving over power and control. If something unexpected happens, take a moment to think and breathe.

Talk with your spouse about a phrase or gesture to indicate that the conversation is getting hot. Remember, they are family. Be aware of the level of tension, tones of voice, and language choices.



**Ask yourself,
“Will my response
build up or further
tear down the
relationship?”**

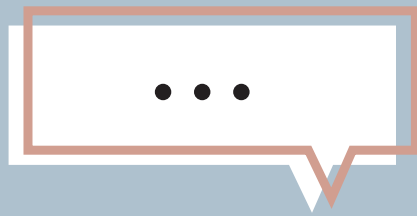
Continuing on...

Your in-laws are part of your family. And they're also the grandparents to your children. Unless they are doing something that negatively impacts your family, it's essential to maintain a healthy relationship with them. **There will be a continual need to have healthy conversations over the years.** Different topics and stages of life will require other discussions. It's important to keep clear expectations with your in-laws at all times! This requires many conversations along the way. Don't shy away from it. Lean into those convos and everyone will get used to them sooner.

Don't forget to have some fun too! Talking with your in-laws doesn't always have to be about the hard conversations. Your relationship with your in-laws doesn't always have to be about your spouse or the grandkids, either. Have fun and get to know them better.

Bonus Questions For A Fun Convo!

- ◆ *What's your favorite story from your son or daughter's childhood?*
- ◆ *What's the best memory from your childhood?*
- ◆ *Where did you grow up? And what was your favorite part of growing up there?*
- ◆ *(If they're married) What has made your marriage successful?*
- ◆ *Do you have any tips for dealing with conflict in a marriage?*
- ◆ *How did you and your spouse meet?*
- ◆ *Tell me one random fact that you love to share.*
- ◆ *What have you accomplished recently in a hobby or professionally?*



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