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How to get the most out of this:

I would recommend you read through the different scenarios to get acquainted with the options and wording for how to use the scripts with your in-laws. You will likely notice similarities in many of the responses...it's intentional. Getting your needs met while facing challenging situations doesn't have to involve memorizing 100's of responses. It's about getting used to wording that's firm, but compassionate and using it with courage, knowing it's okay to speak up!

To jump right to where you want to go, head to:

<u>Page 5</u> for situations that are personal to you

<u>Page 15</u> for situations that are directed toward your marriage

<u>Page 17</u> for situations involving your family as a whole or your children

As a Catholic wife, we're often in the role of establishing the emotions in our family. I hope these scripts help to diffuse tense situations and open the door for a greater sense of peace.



MEET THE AUTHOR

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Miriam Susan has spent nearly 3 decades shielding her husband, 6 children, and herself from unwanted behavior from her in-laws. She now uses her experience to help other Catholic wives compassionately use the ECW Framework with their in-laws to create a more harmonious marriage and family life.



Dealing with in-laws can sometimes be challenging, especially when it comes to addressing sensitive issues. As a practicing Catholic wife, it's important to remember that kindness and love for others should be at the forefront of these conversations.

This doesn't mean you have to compromise on your feelings or needs, but rather, it's about expressing them in a way that promotes understanding and respect.

I created this as a resource for you because it's something I would have LOVED to have had nearly 30 years ago when I first met my husband.

Being around his mom has almost always made me feel uneasy and on edge. It wasn't until the last 10 years that I was able to identify WHY my body had physical reactions to being around her.

She would make comments, throw out subtle jabs, or put me in awkward situations where I didn't know how to respond. I never knew what her reaction might be. It could be normal or explosive, kind or snarky. If I'd had these scripts back then, there's no telling how different our relationship might be today.

Using scripts can be an incredibly helpful tool in these uncomfortable situations. They provide a framework for you to express your thoughts and feelings in a clear, concise, and respectful manner.

Scripts can help you confidently navigate these difficult conversations, ensuring that your voice is heard and your wishes are respected. This resource will allow you to prepare and practice your responses beforehand, reducing the likelihood of being caught off guard or reacting impulsively in the heat of the moment.

The benefits of using these scripts include helping reduce stress and anxiety associated with these conversations, improving communication between you and your in-laws, and ultimately, fostering a healthier and more respectful relationship. Or, if nothing else, you'll know you tried to make things better, even if your efforts don't work out like you hoped.

Remember, it's not about winning an argument, but about creating an environment where everyone feels heard and respected. I hope these scripts will be helpful in your interactions with your in-laws.

Each of the 40+ scenarios is organized based on categories such as **personal** issues between just you and your in-laws, issues for you and your husband as a couple, and issues concerning your family.

For each scenario, you'll find responses for you AND your husband. Because of how my husband was raised, he didn't have the communication skills to know how to support me while standing up to his parents. He's a peacemaker by nature or childhood training. If your husband, like mine, has a desire to back you up in these situations, the provided responses can help him know what to say.

There are 2 options for responses for you and 2 for your husband. The "Compassionate response" is a gentler way to respond to your in-laws in each scenario and the "Assertive response" is a more firm response, but still compassionate. Choose whichever one feels most comfortable or is the most likely to get a favorable reception from your in-laws.

Sometimes, being gentle doesn't work. More challenging or toxic in-laws need to know you're serious about the subject at hand and you'll to take a stronger stance. How you deliver each response with tone of voice and facial expressions will affect how it is received.

More than anything else, I want you to know that you CAN be a good Catholic wife AND stand up for yourself with your in-laws.

Personal Situations:

Scenario: In-laws making subtle jabs at you when your husband isn't around.

Description: When your husband isn't present, your in-laws take the opportunity to make subtle, hurtful comments towards you, making you feel uncomfortable and disrespected.

Compassionate response: "I appreciate your concern and understand that you have our family's best interests at heart. However, I feel that some of your comments are a bit hurtful. Can we discuss this openly?"

Assertive response: "I respect your opinions, but I would appreciate it if you could refrain from making negative comments about my choices. They are mine to make and I am comfortable with them."

Husband's compassionate response: "I've noticed some tension between you and my wife. Can we talk about it and find a way to improve your relationship?"

Husband's assertive response: "I won't tolerate disrespectful behavior towards my wife. Let's treat each other with respect."



>Scenario: In-laws pushing for things against your wishes.

Description: Your in-laws are pressuring you to do things that go against your wishes, making you feel unheard and disrespected.

Compassionate response: "I understand your perspective and why you feel this way. However, we have our reasons for making the choices we do. Can we agree to respect each other's decisions?"

Assertive response: "Our decisions are ours to make. While we appreciate your input, we will not be pressured into doing something we're not comfortable with."

Husband's compassionate response: "I understand you have your opinions, but we need to respect my wife's wishes as well. Let's find a compromise."

Husband's assertive response: "My wife's wishes are important. We need to respect her decisions.

>Scenario: In-laws manipulating situations to make you look like the bad guy.

Description: Your in-laws are twisting situations to make you appear as the villain, damaging your reputation and causing unnecessary conflict.

Compassionate response: "I feel there's been a misunderstanding here. Can we sit down and discuss this so we can clear the air?"

Assertive response: "I will not be painted as the bad guy when I know my intentions and actions were not wrong. Let's discuss this openly and honestly."

Husband's compassionate response: "I feel there's been some misunderstanding. Let's sit down and talk about it."

Husband's assertive response: "It's not fair to manipulate situations to make my wife look bad. Let's be honest and open in our communication."

>Scenario: In-laws not respecting your role as a mother.

Description: You're feeling undermined as a mother because your in-laws constantly question your parenting decisions and disregard your rules for your children.

Compassionate response: "I understand that you have your own experiences and opinions about raising children, but I would appreciate it if you could respect my role as a mother and the decisions I make for my children."

Assertive response: "I am the mother of my children and it's important that my decisions for them are respected. I won't tolerate any undermining of my role as a mother."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, I understand you have a lot of experience raising children, but we need to respect her role as a mother. She's doing a great job and we should support her decisions."

Husband's assertive response: "I need you to respect her role as a mother. This is our family and we will make the decisions that are best for us."

>Scenario: In-laws disrespecting your lifestyle choices.

Description: Your in-laws are openly critical of your lifestyle choices, making you feel judged and disrespected.

Compassionate response: "I understand that we may have different lifestyle choices, but I would appreciate it if you could respect mine as I respect yours."

Assertive response: "My lifestyle choices are personal and I expect them to be respected. Your criticism is not welcome."

Husband's compassionate response: "I understand that our lifestyle choices might be different from what you're used to, but we need to respect her choices. They are part of who she is."

Husband's assertive response: "Our lifestyle choices are not up for debate. We need to respect her choices."

>Scenario: In-laws undermining your authority in front of your children.

Description: You're feeling disrespected as your in-laws are challenging your authority in front of your children, causing confusion and undermining your role as a parent.

Compassionate response: "I understand that you may have different views, but it's important for my children to see me as their authority figure. Please respect this."

Assertive response: "I am their parent and my authority needs to be respected, especially in front of my children."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, it's important that we present a united front to the kids. Let's respect her authority when we're with them."



Husband's assertive response: "She is their mother and her authority needs to be respected. We can't undermine her in front of the kids."

>Scenario: In-laws making you feel like second fiddle.

Description: You're feeling sidelined as your in-laws seem to prioritize others over you, making you feel less important.

Compassionate response: "I understand that everyone has a role in the family, but I would appreciate feeling more included and valued."

Assertive response: "I am a part of this family and I deserve to be treated as such. I won't accept feeling like a second fiddle."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, it's important that she feels valued and included in our family. Let's make sure we're treating everyone equally."

Husband's assertive response: "She is my wife and she deserves to be treated with respect and equality. We can't make her feel like a second fiddle."

>Scenario: In-laws not respecting your Catholic beliefs.

Description: You're feeling disrespected as your in-laws disregard your Catholic beliefs, making you feel uncomfortable and unaccepted.

Compassionate response: "I understand that we have different beliefs, but I would appreciate if you could respect my Catholic views."

Assertive response: "My Catholic beliefs are important to me and they deserve respect. I won't tolerate any disrespect towards them."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, you need to respect our Catholic beliefs. It's important that we feel comfortable and accepted."

Husband's assertive response: "Our Catholic beliefs need to be respected. You can't disregard them."

>Scenario: In-laws making you feel trapped and used.

Description: You're feeling exploited as your in-laws impose on you excessively, making you feel trapped and used.

Compassionate response: "I understand that you may need help, but I also have my own responsibilities and I need my own space. Please respect this."



Assertive response: "I am not here to be used. I have my own life and responsibilities and I need my space."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, it's important that you respect our space and not impose on us excessively. We have our own responsibilities."

Husband's assertive response: "We are not here to be used. You need to respect our space and not impose on us."

>Scenario: In-laws making you feel like you're trying to hit a moving target in terms of trying to please them.

Description: You're feeling frustrated because no matter what you do, it seems like you can't please your in-laws.

Compassionate response: "I'm doing my best to meet your expectations, but it feels like the target is always moving. Can we have a conversation about this?"

Assertive response: "I can't keep trying to hit a moving target. We need to have clear expectations."

Husband's compassionate response: "Can you see how hard my wife and I are trying to please you? Can we work on setting clearer expectations?"

Husband's assertive response: "We can't keep trying to hit a moving target. We need you to set clear expectations."

>Scenario: In-laws making you feel like you're the source of the issues.

Description: You're feeling blamed because your in-laws are making you feel like you're the source of all the issues.

Compassionate Response: "I feel like I'm being blamed for all the issues. Can we talk about this?"

Assertive Response: "I'm not the source of all the issues. We need to address this."

Husband's compassionate response: "We're not the source of all the issues. Let's talk about this."

Husband's assertive response: "We're not the source of all the issues. We need to address this."



>Scenario: In-laws making you feel like your efforts to connect with them are pointless.

Description: You're feeling disheartened because your efforts to connect with your in-laws seem to lead nowhere, but you being hurt.

Compassionate response: "I'm trying to connect with you, but it feels like my efforts are not being recognized. Can we talk about this?"

Assertive response: "My efforts to connect with you are not pointless. We need to address this."

Husband's compassionate response: "We're making efforts to connect with you. We need you to recognize and appreciate our efforts."

Husband's assertive response: "Our efforts to connect with you are not pointless. We need to address this."

>Scenario: In-laws making you feel like you're not a good wife.

Description: You're feeling hurt because your in-laws are making you feel like you're not living up to their expectations as a wife for their son.

Compassionate response: "I'm doing my best as a wife, but your comments are hurting me. Can we talk about this?"

Assertive response: "I am a good wife. Your comments are hurtful and need to stop."

Husband's compassionate response: "She's a wonderful wife. Your comments are hurting her."

Husband's assertive response: "She is a good wife. Your comments are hurtful and need to stop."

>Scenario: In-laws making you feel like you're not a good mother.

Description: Your in-laws criticize your parenting skills or decisions, making you feel inadequate as a mother.

Compassionate response: "I understand that you have your own views on parenting, but it's important to me that you respect my role as a mother."

Assertive response: "I am the mother of my children and I need you to respect my parenting decisions."



Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, we understand your concerns, but we need you to respect our decisions as parents."

Husband's assertive response: "We are the parents of our children and we need you to respect our decisions."

>Scenario: In-laws making you feel like you're not a good Catholic.

Description: Your in-laws are questioning your faith or religious practices, making you feel like you're not a good Catholic.

Compassionate Response: "I understand that we may have different views on faith, but I am doing my best to live out my Catholic beliefs."

Assertive Response: "My Catholic faith is personal. I need you to respect that I'm living my faith the best way I know."

Husband's Compassionate Response: "Mom, Dad, please respect how my wife lives her Catholic beliefs."

Husband's Assertive Response: "My wife is a great Catholic woman and we need you to respect that."

>Scenario: In-laws making you feel like you're not a good daughter-in-law.

Description: Your in-laws express dissatisfaction with you as a daughter-in-law, making you feel like you're not living up to their expectations.

Compassionate response: "I understand that we may have different expectations, but I need you to respect me as your daughter-in-law."

Assertive response: "I am your daughter-in-law and I need you to respect me."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, we understand your concerns, but I need you to respect her as my wife and your daughter-in-law."

Husband's assertive response: "She is your daughter-in-law and my wife and I need you to respect her."

>Scenario: In-laws making you feel like you're not a good person.

Description: Your in-laws are making negative comments about your character or behavior, making you feel like you're not a good person.



Compassionate response: "I understand that we may have different views, but I need you to respect me as a person."

Assertive response: "I am a good person and I need you to respect that."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, we understand your concerns, but I need you to respect her as a person."

Husband's assertive response: "She is a good person and I need you to respect that."

>Scenario: In-laws making you feel like you're not respected.

Description: Your in-laws treat you in a way that makes you feel disrespected or undervalued.

Compassionate response: "I understand that we may have different views, but I need you to respect me, just as I respect you."

Assertive response: "I deserve respect, just like you do, and I need you to show that."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, I don't expect you to see things our way, but I do need you to respect her."

Husband's assertive response: "She is my wife and deserves respect and I need you to show that."

>Scenario: In-laws making you feel like you're not loved.

Description: You're feeling unloved because your in-laws don't show you the affection and appreciation you deserve.

Compassionate response: "I understand that everyone has different ways of showing love, but I need to feel loved and appreciated in this family."

Assertive response: "I deserve to feel loved and appreciated in this family. It's important that we all show love to each other."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, I need you to show more love and appreciation to my wife. She's an important part of our family and deserves to feel loved, not excluded."



Husband's assertive response: "It's important that my wife feels loved and appreciated in our family. I need you to make sure you're showing her the love she deserves."

>Scenario: In-laws making you feel like you're not valued.

Description: You're feeling undervalued because your in-laws don't acknowledge your contributions and efforts.

Compassionate response: "I understand that you may not realize it, but I need to feel valued for my contributions to this family."

Assertive response: "I contribute a lot to this family and I deserve to be valued for it. It's important that my efforts are acknowledged."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, I need you to value and appreciate the contributions my wife makes to our family. She works hard and deserves praise for everything she does."

Husband's assertive response: "My wife's contributions to our family are invaluable. You need to show her that you value and appreciate her."

>Scenario: In-laws making you feel like you're not heard.

Description: You're feeling unheard because your in-laws don't listen to your opinions and concerns.

Compassionate response: "I understand that we may have different perspectives, but I need my voice to be heard in this family."

Assertive response: "My opinions and concerns matter. I need to be heard and taken seriously in this family."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, you need to listen to my wife's opinions and concerns. Her voice is important in our family."

Husband's assertive response: "My wife's voice needs to be heard in our family. You need to listen and take her concerns seriously."

>Scenario: In-laws making you feel like you're not seen.

Description: You're feeling invisible because your in-laws don't acknowledge your presence or importance.



Compassionate response: "I understand that you may not realize it, but I need to feel seen and acknowledged in this family."

Assertive response: "I am a part of this family and I need to be seen and acknowledged. My presence matters."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, I need you to acknowledge my wife's presence and importance in our family. She's a vital part of our lives."

Husband's assertive response: "My wife is a vital part of our family and her presence needs to be acknowledged. She needs to feels seen."

Scenario: In-laws making you feel like you're not understood.

Description: You're feeling misunderstood because your in-laws don't seem to understand your feelings or perspectives.

Compassionate response: "I understand that we may see things differently, but I need to feel understood in this family."

Assertive response: "My feelings and perspectives are valid. I need to be understood and respected in this family."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, you need to understand and respect my wife's feelings and perspectives. It's important that she feels understood in our family."

Husband's assertive response: "My wife's feelings and perspectives need to be understood and respected in our family. We need to make sure she feels understood."

>Scenario: In-laws using your own toxic family members as a reason to say you're treating your in-laws poorly.

Description: Your in-laws use your toxic family members as a reason to accuse you of treating them poorly. They may bring up past conflicts or issues, using them to justify their own inappropriate behavior.

Compassionate response: "I understand that you're upset and feel that I'm treating you poorly. I want to clarify that my past family issues have no bearing on our relationship. I'm committed to treating everyone with respect and kindness."

Assertive response: "It's not fair to use my past family issues as a reason for your accusations. I treat everyone based on their actions and behavior, not on past conflicts or issues."

Husband's compassionate response: "I understand that you feel my wife is treating you poorly. However, it's not fair to bring up her past family issues. We should focus on our current relationship and how we can improve it."

Husband's assertive response: "It's not acceptable to use my wife's past family issues as a reason to accuse her of treating you poorly. We should focus on our actions and behavior, not on past conflicts or issues."

>Scenario: In-laws putting down any activities (like volunteering or hobbies) you enjoy.

Description: Your in-laws belittle or put down any activities that you enjoy, such as volunteering or hobbies. They may make negative comments, dismiss the importance of these activities, or try to discourage you from pursuing them.

Compassionate response: "I understand that we all have different interests and passions. I respect yours and I would appreciate it if you could respect mine. My hobbies and volunteering activities are important to me and bring me joy."

Assertive response: "I feel disrespected when you belittle the activities that I enjoy. I would like you to stop making negative comments about my hobbies and volunteering. They are important to me and I have the right to pursue what makes me happy."

Husband's compassionate response: "I know you may not understand why these activities are important to her, but they bring her joy and fulfillment. It would mean a lot to both of us if you could respect her choices."

Husband's assertive response: "It's not acceptable for you to belittle the activities that she enjoys. She has every right to pursue her hobbies and volunteering without being criticized or discouraged."

Situations Affecting Your Marriage:

>Scenario: In-laws contacting your family, friends, or workplace inappropriately to discuss you or your husband or children.

Description: Your in-laws overstep boundaries by contacting your family, friends, or workplace to discuss you or your family members. This could be sharing personal information, spreading rumors, or making inappropriate comments.

Compassionate response: "I understand that you're concerned and want to be involved in our lives, but it's important to respect our privacy. Please refrain from discussing our personal matters with others without our consent."



Assertive response: "It's inappropriate to discuss our personal matters with others without our consent. We need you to respect our privacy."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, I know you care about us, but it's not okay to discuss our personal matters with others without our consent. Please respect our privacy."

Husband's assertive response: "It's not acceptable to discuss our personal matters with others without our consent. We need you to respect our privacy."

>Scenario: In-laws making you feel like an unequal partner in your marriage.

Description: You're feeling undervalued as your in-laws treat you as less than an equal partner in your marriage, undermining your role and contribution.

Compassionate response: "I understand that we may differ in our views on marriage, but I hope you can see I am an equal partner in my marriage to your son."

Assertive response: "I am an equal partner in this marriage and I deserve to be treated as such. I won't accept any less."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, it's important that you treat her as an equal partner in our marriage. She contributes just as much as I do."

Husband's assertive response: "She is an equal partner in our marriage and she deserves to be treated as such. You can't undermine her role."

>Scenario: In-laws interfering with your family's financial decisions.

Description: Your in-laws are trying to influence your family's financial decisions, causing tension and conflict.

Compassionate response: "I understand that you may have advice to offer, but our financial decisions are private and we would appreciate it if you could respect that."

Assertive response: "Our financial decisions are our own to make. Your interference is not welcome."

Husband's compassionate response: "I understand you're concerned about our financial situation, but we've got it under control. We need to make our own decisions."



Husband's assertive response: "Our financial decisions are our own to make. We need you to respect that."

<u>Situations Affecting Your Family:</u>

>Scenario: In-laws intruding on your family time.

Description: You're trying to enjoy some quality time with your immediate family, but your in-laws keep imposing themselves, disrupting your plans and the peaceful atmosphere.

Compassionate response: "I understand that you love spending time with us and we love having you around too. However, we had planned some family time this weekend. Could we perhaps schedule a time next week when we can all enjoy each other's company?"

Assertive response: "We value our family time and had plans for this weekend. In the future, please call ahead to check if we're available before dropping by."

Husband's compassionate response: "I understand that you want to spend time with our children, but it's also important for us to have our family time. Let's find a balance that works for everyone."

Husband's assertive response: "Our family time is important. We need to set boundaries for when you can visit.

>Scenario: In-laws disregarding your boundaries and manipulating the children.

Description: Your in-laws are ignoring the boundaries you've set and are manipulating your children, undermining your authority and causing confusion and tension.

Compassionate response: "I know you love the kids and want to spoil them, but it's important for us to maintain consistency with our family rules. Can we discuss what's acceptable when you're spending time with them?"

Assertive response: "Our rules for the children are non-negotiable. Please respect them and do not encourage the kids to break them."

Husband's compassionate response: "I know you love our children, but it's important to respect the boundaries we've set. Let's discuss this together."

Husband's assertive response: "Our children's well-being is our priority. We need to respect the boundaries we've set."

>Scenario: In-laws questioning your schooling choices for the children.

Description: Your in-laws are questioning your decisions about your children's education, causing you stress and doubt.

Compassionate response: "I understand your concerns about our children's education, but rest assured that we have thoughtfully considered our choices. I would appreciate your support in this matter."

Assertive response: "Our decisions about our children's education are not up for debate. I expect you to respect our choices."

Husband's compassionate response: "I know you care about our children's education, but we've thought a lot about this and we believe this is the best decision for them."

Husband's assertive response: "We've made our decision about the children's schooling. We need you to respect that."

>Scenario: In-laws not respecting your family's handling of sicknesses.

Description: Your in-laws are not respecting your family's decisions on how to handle sicknesses, causing additional stress during already difficult times.

Compassionate response: "I understand that you may have your own ideas about handling sickness, but we have our own approach and would appreciate your respect and support."

Assertive response: "Our decisions on how to handle sicknesses are not up for debate. Your respect for our choices is expected."

Husband's compassionate response: "I know you're worried about our health, but we're handling this situation the best way we know how. We need your support, not criticism."

Husband's assertive response: "We're handling this health situation as we see fit. We need you to respect our decisions."

>Scenario: In-laws making you feel like your family is an extension of theirs.

Description: You're feeling overwhelmed because your in-laws are treating your family as if it's an extension of their own, not respecting your family's individuality and autonomy."



Compassionate response: "I understand that we are all one big family, but it's important to remember that our family also has its own identity and needs."

Assertive response: "Our family is not just an extension of yours. We have our own identity and we need our space to grow and thrive."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, I know you love us and want to be involved, but we need to have our own space as a family."

Husband's assertive response: "We need to space and time to ourselves. Our family is not just an extension of yours."

>Scenario: In-laws disregarding your wishes for gifts and birthday celebrations.

Description: Your in-laws consistently ignore your preferences for gifts and how birthdays are celebrated, causing discomfort and disappointment.

Compassionate response: "I appreciate your thoughtfulness, but I would really prefer if you could respect my wishes when it comes to gifts and birthday celebrations."

Assertive response: "It's important to me that my preferences for gifts and birthday celebrations are respected. I need you to take this into consideration."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, we value your contributions, but it's important that you respect our wishes when it comes to gifts and birthday celebrations."

Husband's assertive response: "We need to respect our preferences for gifts and birthday celebrations. It's important to us."

>Scenario: In-laws causing stress and tension during family events like weddings, baptisms, first Holy Communion, Confirmation, funerals.

Description: The in-laws create unnecessary drama around important family events, detracting from the joy or solemnity of the occasion.

Compassionate response: "I understand that emotions can run high during these events, but it's important that we all work together to keep them peaceful and enjoyable."

Assertive response: "These events are important to me and my family. I need you to contribute positively to them."



Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, we understand that these events can be stressful, but we need you to help keep them peaceful and enjoyable for everyone."

Husband's assertive response: "These events are important to our family. We need you to keep things light."

>Scenario: In-laws bringing bags of unwanted items to your home without permission or coming by unannounced.

Description: Your in-laws frequently bring bags of items that you do not want or need to your home. They do this without asking for permission and often come by unannounced, disrupting your privacy and personal space.

Compassionate response: "I understand that you want to help and share things with us, but we really need to keep our space clear and organized. Could we discuss together what items might be useful before you bring them over?"

Assertive response: "It's important for us to have control over our own space. Please ask us before bringing items over, and respect our decision if we say no."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, we appreciate your generosity, but we need to keep our home organized. Let's discuss before you bring anything over."

Husband's assertive response: "It's not acceptable to bring items to our home without asking. We need you to respect our space and our decisions."

>Scenario: In-laws using your children as a means to hurt you or turn the children against you.

Description: Your in-laws manipulate your children in an attempt to hurt you or turn the children against you. This could be through negative comments, creating conflict, or undermining your parenting.

Compassionate response: "I understand that this is a difficult situation for you. It's not right for anyone to use our children as a means to hurt or manipulate others. It's important to remember that our children's well-being is our priority."

Assertive response: "It's unacceptable for you to manipulate our children in an attempt to hurt me or turn them against me. I won't tolerate this behavior and I expect you to respect my parenting and my children's well-being."



Husband's compassionate response (to you in front of his parents): "I don't agree with our children being used in this way. I want you to know that I'm here for you and our children. Mom and Dad, we need to discuss how this is hurting my wife's and our children's well-being."

Husband's Assertive Response: "Mom, Dad, it's not okay for you to manipulate our children to hurt my wife or turn them against her. We won't tolerate this behavior and we expect you to respect our parenting from this point onward."

>Scenario: In-laws disregarding your food or environmental allergies or preferences, such as no smoking or drinking in the house, not serving foods you or your children can't eat, or the use of heavy perfumes or scented candles.

Description: Your in-laws disregard your or your children's food allergies or environmental preferences. They may smoke or drink in the house, serve foods that you or your children can't eat, or use heavy perfumes or scented candles despite knowing that these things are not acceptable.

Compassionate response: "I understand that our family's food or environmental allergies or preferences are different than how you live in your home. It's important to remember that our health and comfort, as well as that of our children, should be respected so we can enjoy our visits."

Assertive response: "It's not acceptable to disregard our food or environmental allergies or preferences. Our family's health and comfort are not negotiable, especially in our own home."

Husband's compassionate response: "I know it's hard when our food and environmental preferences differ from yours. My wife and I want you to know that we need these requests to be respected so we can enjoy our time together safely."

Husband's assertive response: "It's not acceptable for you to disregard our food and environmental allergies or preferences. We need you to please respect our needs and the health of our family."

>Scenario: In-laws interfering with a pregnancy, including announcing it, demanding to care for older children during delivery, visiting in the hospital, meeting the baby, or dealing with a miscarriage/stillbirth.

Description: Your in-laws interfere with your pregnancy in various ways. They may handle things inappropriately and/or make the pregnancy all about themselves.



Compassionate response: "I understand that you're excited about the new addition baby, but I would appreciate it if you could respect our wishes during this sensitive time. We will keep you updated and involved, but we need some space to navigate this pregnancy in our own way."

Assertive response: "You need to understand that this is our pregnancy. We will decide when and how to share news, who will care for our older children, and who will visit us in the hospital. We expect you to respect our decisions."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom, Dad, we love your excitement (or appreciate your concern) and know you mean well, but this is a very personal and sensitive time for us. We need you to respect our boundaries and decisions regarding this pregnancy."

Husband's assertive response: "This is our pregnancy and we will make the decisions that are best for our family. We expect you to respect our wishes and honor our requests."

>Scenario: In-laws comparing your family with others.

Description: Your in-laws frequently compare your family with another family they consider "better". This could be in terms of lifestyle, parenting, career success, or any other aspect of life. This comparison is often used to belittle or criticize you and your family.

Compassionate response: "I understand that you have your own perspectives and opinions, but it's important to remember that every family is unique and has its own strengths and weaknesses. We should focus on supporting each other rather than making comparisons."

Assertive response: "I appreciate your point of view, but it's not kind to compare our family with others. Each family has its own journey and challenges. Let's focus on understanding and respecting our differences."

Husband's compassionate response: "I know you might think that other families are doing better, but it's important to remember that we all have our own paths and challenges. Let's focus on supporting each other rather than comparing."

Husband's assertive response: "I understand your perspective, but it's not constructive to compare our family with others. We should respect each other's unique journeys and challenges. Let's focus on that."

>Scenario: In-laws using your children to inappropriately feed an emotional need.



Description: Your in-laws treat your children in ways that aren't healthy, ie. telling your child that they will be sad if the child doesn't come visit or give them a hug. They put an unfair burden on your children which can make the children feel responsible for the happiness of their adult relatives.

Compassionate response: "I understand that you love our children and want to see that love returned. However, it's important to remember that they are still young and it's not their responsibility to manage your emotions."

Assertive response: "It's not appropriate to make our children feel responsible for your emotional state. They are still young and should not be burdened with your own emotional needs. We need to discuss healthier ways for you to interact with them."

Husband's compassionate response: "I know you love our kids and want to be close to them. But it's not fair to make them feel responsible for your happiness. We need to find a better way for you to express your feelings."

Husband's assertive response: "It's not okay for you to use our children to fulfill your personal needs. They are kids and should not be burdened with catering to your emotional desires. Please don't speak to them in those ways."

>Scenario: In-laws giving "gifts" and asking they be returned or not donated.

Description: Your in-laws have made a habit of giving you or your children things that appear as gifts for birthdays, Christmas, etc, but they get upset when they're not used OR want them back instead of letting you give them away. They want to control the "gifts", causing you and your family stress over something that was not presented as a "loan".

Compassionate response: "We appreciate all the things you've given us, but we need to know ahead of time what you want back so we can be sure to set it aside for you."

Assertive response: "Thank you for letting me know that you want something returned. From now on, we'd prefer not to receive things that you want us to return. It's confusing for the kids and is too much for me to keep up with."

Husband's compassionate response: "Mom and Dad, I know you enjoy giving us things, but we have a hard time knowing what is a gift and what is something you're just letting us use. Can we come up with a solution that's easier on us?"

Husband's assertive response: "We're not going to keep doing this. If you give us something, we're going to assume it is a gift and that we can do with it what we want."



Caring for yourself before and after these difficult conversations is critical for your spiritual and mental health...and even your physical health!

Knowing what I know now about how long-term exposure to stressful situations could cause lasting damage to my heath, I would have done so many things differently.

I would have found ways to lessen the effects of stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol on my body. There are things you can do like take an Epsom salt bath, listen to relaxing music, pray, spend time in Adoration, use natural lotions or oils that have relaxing properties (like lavender) or take natural supplements (like L-Theanine or Ashwagandha) that help your body counteract those hormones.

I would also have found a counselor or therapist or coach who could have walked with me through these stressful times and reminded me that there's NOTHING WRONG with wanting to have some space between my in-laws and my family.

I would have stopped talking with friends or family who didn't understand what I was going through and stopped listening to their well-meaning, but irrelevant advice to "forgive and forget" or just tolerate my in-laws abusive behavior because they're my husband's mom and dad. Just because someone is related to you (by blood or by marriage) doesn't mean they get a free pass to hurt you. Even if they don't mean to hurt you...you don't have to be their doormat DIL and endure it for the sake of the relationship.

I would have prioritized our family FIRST. If my in-laws coming to visit happened to fall at a time that wasn't convenient, I would have tried to reschedule. If they weren't willing or able to reschedule, they would have needed to adjust their expectations because we were going to continue our own schedules as they were.

I would have tried to stop trying to please my in-laws who could not be pleased. I'd have stopped going out of my way to go "above and beyond" to make them happy and comfortable because they always found something to be critical of. There was no need for me to exhaust myself cleaning and cooking for people who would find ways to criticize me or my home.

Finally, I would have found ways to let my husband spend time with his parents if he really wanted to, but not feel an obligation to join in. And I would also find ways to allow my children to not be obligated to join in. My youngest daughter (now an adult) told me recently that she NEVER remembers a time of seeing my inlaws that didn't include my being stressed out or an overarching feeling of tension. If it was that important for my husband to visit with his mom and dad, we should have the choice to participate or not.

Dealing with Resistance from Your In-Laws:

It's crucial to remember that standing your ground doesn't mean you're being unkind or disrespectful. It's about asserting your individuality and ensuring that your wishes, and those of your family, are respected.

When dealing with pushback from your in-laws, it's natural to feel a sense of guilt or obligation. However, it's important to remember that you and your husband have the right to make decisions for your family without pressure, guilt, shame or manipulation.

Being kind doesn't mean you have to be your in-laws' doormat. You can express your feelings and concerns with respect and firmness.

It's okay to say no when you feel uncomfortable...and it's okay to feel uncomfortable saying no!

Remember, your primary responsibility is to protect your family's well-being and peace. It's not about winning an argument, but about maintaining a healthy and respectful relationship with your in-laws while ensuring all your family's needs are met.

Despite how they may react, you're not doing them any favors by allowing them to treat you in a manner that isn't one of respect as their daughter-in-law and their son's wife.

If your in-laws push back against your initial responses, you can try the following scripts to assert your stance without completely re-hashing everything. They're listed in order from the "softest" reply to the most firm.

It's important that you and your husband come across as having each other's backs. You do not want your in-laws to be in a position to drive a wedge between you. Your marriage MUST come first. That's what your marriage vows require.

For you or your husband:

- 1. **Compassionate:** "We understand that you may have different views, but it's important for us that you respect our choices and decisions. We hope we can find a way to respect each other's differences."
- 2. **Firm but kind:** "We appreciate your perspective, but we must insist that our decisions be respected. We believe it's crucial for our relationship to have mutual respect."
- Assertive: "We hear your concerns, but we stand by our decisions. we need you

to respect our choices, even if you don't agree with them. We'll do the same for you."

- 4. **Strongly assertive:** "We've made our position clear, and we expect it to be respected. It's important for us to feel supported in our decisions."
- 5. **Non-negotiable:** "Our decisions are not up for debate. We need you to respect our wishes and boundaries. This is non-negotiable."

If things get heated, you are under NO obligation to keep the conversation going. If you're on a call, tell them you're not going to continue the conversation and you're going to hang up if they keep discussing it. Then, you need to hang up if they continue.

If you're together, say something similar. You can say that you're not going to discuss this anymore right now and if they won't let it drop, you will leave. Or if they're at your home, you'll ask them to leave. Then, you follow through.

It might be the HARDEST thing you've ever done to walk away from a heated conversation or argument, but you're not going to "fix" anything when emotions are running high. The best way to avoid sin in those situations is to stop and exit. You can always revisit the topic later, once everyone has calmed down.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge your courage and strength. It's not easy to stand up for yourself, especially when it involves people you care about and love, like your in-laws.

The fact that you're willing to address these issues head-on while maintaining respect and kindness, is a testament to your character.

Remember that this process may be new and challenging for your husband as well. He may be navigating these waters for the first time, standing up to his parents in ways he never has before.

He may go through many different feelings including shame, guilt, sorrow, anger, resentment, and confusion, to name a few. Please be loving and patient with him as you both work through this together, as a team.

Your husband's willingness to work with you on these matters is something to be truly appreciated. It's a sign of his commitment to you and your family's well-being.

And if you don't have your husband's full support? Pray. I couldn't count the hours I spent praying for my husband to see how his parents' behavior was affecting me and our children.



It took some pretty dramatic events for him to realize that the situation wasn't all in my head. He used to say I needed to pray about how I saw his parents and see what part I was playing in all of it.

I praise God that he DID eventually realize that he had a very toxic, unhealthy, and enmeshed relationship with his parents and it was severely damaging our marriage and, as a result, hurting our 6 children.

Prayer changes everything. Ask the Blessed Mother to intercede for you. Ask your Guardian Angel to protect your marriage and family. Ask St. Michael the Archangel to defend you and protect you from evil, no matter the source.

Seek out support from other women who KNOW what you're going through and won't judge you or say things like "But they're his parents...they're your kids' grandparents!"

As you continue to navigate these complex relationships, remember that *you're not alone*. My **Empowered Catholic Wife Inner Circle** monthly membership program is designed to provide ongoing support and resources to help you manage these situations.

The program offers a wealth of information along with strategies to help you protect yourself and your family from toxic behavior while maintaining a healthy separation from your in-laws. It's an investment in your family's future and your own peace of mind. I invite you to consider it as a valuable tool in your journey towards healthier, more harmonious family relationships.

You can learn more by going to www.EmpoweredCatholicWife.com

May God bless you!

Go in peace,



P.S. Want to connect via my Catholic Wives Desiring Peace Podcast? You can find it on Spotify, Apple Podcasts and YouTube.









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