

How To Win Over Your IN-LAWS

– a contribution by FLS Senior Therapist, Mrs Theresa Bung

Picture courtesy of Mr Victor Ong



This issue features two articles that focus on couples. In the first article, FLS' senior therapist, Mrs Theresa Bung, share tips on how couples can improve their relationship with their in-laws as part of a happy extended family. The second article traces a couple's faith journey through Natural Family Planning. This is a contribution by a husband and wife, Matthew and Bernadette Ang, both of whom are also trainee instructors from the Natural Family Planning Service. In the article they share insights into how couples can bring their marriage closer to God.

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HOW TO WIN OVER YOUR IN-LAWS

The family is usually viewed from the outside, as a union of two persons. But more often than not, it is a collaboration of two families as well.

Some people are blessed by having a very good relationship with their in-laws, while others can barely tolerate them. No matter what kind of relationship that you may have with your in-laws, there will surely be some kind of conflict after some time. Here are some ideas to help minimise such conflicts.

KNOW YOUR IN-LAWS

Family of origin

It is important to understand your spouse's family of origin. We are all influenced by the family that we come from. We are impacted by their values, coping stances and their way of

thinking. Exploring their ways of dealing with conflicts, their communication styles, their way of handling finance and so forth, will prove to be an effective way of getting along with them.

Evaluate your in-laws' needs, life cycle and interest

Be sensitive if your in-laws are going through a transition of career switch or retirement. They may be going through a lot of tremendous stress and possibly experiencing certain loss such as income or status which might be difficult for them to accept. Your patience and understanding of their needs will make them feel respected.

As your in-laws grow with age, it is important to discuss with them regarding their health and financial issues. Ask them about their expectations of health care and the kind of support they may need from their children.

ACT OUT YOUR LOVE

Develop a WE attitude

To make your in-laws feel valued, provide an inclusive WE attitude. Share with them your decisions you have made as a couple such as buying a house, car or annual holiday plans. Families that play together stay together. It is therefore vital that

couples share the celebrations observed by in-laws. Inviting your in-laws to your home and cooking them a meal, planning a surprise birthday or anniversary party for them, will indeed make them feel special. You can vary in your activities with your in-laws such as bringing them for movies, meals or shopping.

BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH IN-LAWS

Boundaries

Developing a good relationship with in-laws need not be difficult. As a couple, set boundaries and decide ahead of time on how much involvement you are prepared to allow your parents to have on your married life. Here are some suggestions:

- Define and set boundaries with your in-laws concerning your expectations, grand parenting roles, financial issues, family time and house rules
- Newly-weds should have space for intimate bonding. Parents-in-laws should have free time to indulge in their hobbies and interests. Both parties should observe the rule of no unannounced visits to each other's homes as a sign of respect for privacy.

BUILDING BRIDGES WITH IN-LAWS

Acceptance

Marital problems start when parents and spouse compete for the same person. The rule of the thumb in conflict is NEVER criticise your spouse's parents. Acceptance is powerful in families. The more they accept each other, the more they discover and appreciate one another.

Loyalty

It is natural that your spouse may feel some loyalty towards his/her family. However, you may want to highlight to your spouse if you feel "excluded" from his/her family. Open communication will indeed prevent misunderstandings within the family.

Encouragement

Talk positively about your spouse with your in-laws. All parents want to know that they have raised their children well and your positive comments will make them feel proud.

In conclusion, as John Powell (a Catholic Priest) once said: "*Love works for those who work at it. It will be ideal if every couple can say to oneself that MY FAMILY IS MY LIFE, MY LOVE, MY EVERYTHING!*"

Natural Family Planning – God's gift to marriages

NFP service in Singapore

In the light of the Church teachings by Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae* (1968), the NFP service in Singapore was established in 1973. There are currently 15 NFP parish centres, managed by a group of 30 trained and dedicated instructors as well as trainees. The service is open to all who are keen to learn the Billings Ovulation Method. Besides guiding couples to achieve and postpone pregnancy naturally, the NFP instructors also welcome their clients to return for refresher course, especially when their fertility cycles change (e.g. during breastfeeding, approaching menopause, on medications).

With goals to increase the awareness and practice of NFP to all Catholics in Singapore, the NFP service needs to expand the current group of instructors and promoters. Other than spreading the pro-life message, many instructors have found it rewarding that NFP has strengthened the marriage and family bond of their clients.

Serving God through teaching NFP

Teresa and Patrick Phua have been NFP instructors for the past 15 years. "In the first 5 years of teaching NFP,

we read and digested all things about NFP and we tried to overcome our shyness in talking about sex and mucus with a smiling face. We attended all meetings and courses diligently because we were interested to devour all things NFP and enhance our teaching skills.

We remembered by heart the difficult medical terms of NFP so that we could use them correctly at the right opportunity."

"In the next 5 years, we were rewarded when our couples returned with babies in their arms and recommended us to their friends and relatives. We got invited to their church weddings, babies' first month and first year celebrations. We got more

recommendations from 'friends of friends'. Every week, we felt the strong call to go meet our couples to share with them about NFP."

"For the past 5 years, we continue to look forward to NFP teaching days. In teaching NFP, we also look into our own lives and thank God for our own family. Once we are offered to do HIS work, we feel HE will guide us to the right path. Till today, we still attend all trainings to be updated and be relevant to our calling as NFP instructors. We stand by our code of ethics and morality that God is the creator of life and death. After each NFP session, we feel good, thankful and grateful."

Billings Ovulation Method of Natural Family Planning Teacher Training Course

A course for couples and ladies who are passionate about teaching NFP – upholding the sanctity of life, the sacredness of marriage and dignity of the human body.

Pre-requisites:

- Couples and ladies preferably with some knowledge of NFP.
- Trainees will be attached to a centre before and after training to gain experience.
- Under the guidance of a senior teacher, you will prepare and guide couples in the understanding and use of the method.

Date: Sat, 21 Aug & Sun, 22 Aug 2010 | Time: 2 – 5pm (Sat), 10m – 4pm (Sun)
Place: CAEC, Highland Road

To enquire or sign up, contact: Sybil 91061990, nfpsin@hotmail.com or use the online form. For more info about Natural Family Planning, visit <http://www.catholic.org.sg/nfp>