

## Mother-in-laws, Daughter-in-laws & The Man in the Middle

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**By Becca Kaufman & Paula Ramsey**

Have you ever seen a groom's mother looking more like a bride than the bride herself? Whether it's a whiter white, a bigger ball gown, or eye-popping cleavage it says the same thing, "I don't like her, why did he marry her and don't I look fabulous?" How about the bride who seems to go out of her way to exclude her new "mom-in-law"? By not involving "mom" in the wedding plans to making sure the toasts and pictures only revolve around her family, the struggle begins. And what about the man in the middle? He loves them both; does he really have to choose?

The rivalry between mother-in-laws and daughter-in-laws is infamous for a reason, it really does exist. The mother must love her child enough to let him grow up and become fully independent (sounds easy-not!). The bride must walk into an existing family and try to become part of it (good luck!). So the potential for conflict between mother and wife is high as roles and expectations change. For the groom, one family becomes two and how he negotiates between them is crucial. Here are some pointers to make the transition easier as you near your wedding day.

#### **The Bride, The Daughter-in-law, The Son Snatcher:**

- It's his mom's day too. Find a few places in the wedding planning where she can help and offer her opinion.
- Make sure it's even steven when it comes to pictures and toasts. The groom's side counts too.
- Acknowledge her. During the father/daughter dance have the groom join in on the dance floor with his mother.
- Thank her. She raised the love of your life; she can't be all bad.
- Try to keep him out of the middle.

#### **The Mother of the Groom, The Mother-in-law, Mommie Dearest:**

- Make sure you acknowledge the bride, especially on her wedding day. The single most hurtful thing you can do is not tell her how beautiful she looks in her wedding dress.
- Don't steal her thunder, it's her day. Dress appropriately and don't be afraid to ask the bride for suggestions. A fun outing could be shopping for your dress together.
- Be helpful without intruding. When it comes to the wedding plans offer your opinion only when asked.
- Don't put your son in the position of having to choose between you and his bride. You will lose.
- Try to keep him out of the middle.

#### **The Groom, The Son, The Man in the Middle:**

- Involve your mom in the proposal process. Let your mom know you're ring shopping.
- Present a united front to your mom regarding wedding decisions. Don't agree with the bride only to desert her and agree with mom later.

- Understand and accept that you set the tone. If you are disrespectful to your mother what can you expect from your bride?
- You are in the middle but you can be the peacekeeper. Talk it out before it's too late.

*Pick up Susan Shapiro Barash's invaluable book *Mothers-in-law and Daughters-in-law, Love, Hate, Rivalry and Reconciliation* (New Horizon Press) for more guidance for after the wedding.*