

About You

By Harriett Muhammad

Dear Harriett: Tell me how to get rid of a domineering mother-in-law. She's been moving in and out of our home for 22 years, causing trouble.

MY HUSBAND is her only child, and I believe she hates and envies me. She tells lies on the children (which has been proved), but tries to appear as a saint by spouting the Bible to everyone.

My husband buries his head in the sand when I tell him about his mother and cries, "It's not fair for all of this to fall on me." In the meantime, our family lives separated — the children and his mother at our house and he and I in back of our store.

My mother-in-law comes to our store, early every day. My husband pays her by the week for helping. She tells all our business to the customers and is really snoop. To me, my husband is a little sniveling boy and she doesn't want him to grow up. I have the highest respect for his business sense and his ability to make money — but as a man, I have lost respect for him because of the things he has said and done.

AT TIMES, she wants to stay with us in back of the store. However, I tell her to stay home each time. Then she will sulk for a week and threaten to move because she feels no one appreciates her. This has been going on for two years. Between these two gloomy, pessimistic people, I am going nuts—really.
—Mrs. F. J.

Dear Mrs. F. J.: After 22 years of successfully withstanding in-law trouble, you can rest assured that you have passed the test, and that you are not "going nuts—really."

Your mother-in-law may get on your nerves quite a bit, but from what you have told me, she is also a help. She is working in your business and acting as a housekeeper and baby-sitter. No doubt your husband's great business sense has taken this into consideration from time to time.

YOU CANNOT accomplish anything by acting on your own — this is a situation both you and your husband must resolve. It is also a situation that the two of you helped create and maintain all of these years.

You must decide whether or not your mother-in-law's annoyances are great enough to require her removal from your business and home. If you should make such a move, your relationships would probably improve. Many couples have in-law problems that could be reduced or eliminated if the disagreeing parties could minimize their amount of contact.

When the situation becomes unpleasant enough for the two of you, you will act. There is no easy or painless way out of your dilemma, so don't expect one.

Something on your mind? Write and tell me about it.

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