

What to Do When Your Nosy Sister-in-Law Won't Butt Out

Tuesday, September 15, 2015
by Jillian Kramer

Every fiber of your being *wants* to like your [sister-in-law](#). But when she butts her nose into your personal business, you can't help but let your affection for her quickly fade to [relationship-destroying resentment](#). "Nosy sister-in-laws are interrogators and like to tell you how to do everything," describes [Debbie Mandel](#), a stress-management specialist and author of *Addicted to Stress: A Woman's 7 Step Program to Reclaim Joy and Spontaneity in Life*. "Usually, they are oppositional and forceful about their opinions."

If your sister-in-law won't keep her opinions to herself or insists her brother divulge every intimate detail about your relationship, here's what you can do.

Communicate openly your concerns to your partner.

"A wife who suppresses her concerns is a [stressed woman](#)," warns Mandel. "The stress of suppression erodes a relationship and has even been implicated in cardiovascular disease." Consider taking a direct approach with your spouse, in which you remain "respectful, but voice your concerns with concrete specifics as opposed to what you intuit," she suggests. [Rachel Needle](#), a clinical psychologist and certified sex therapist based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, suggests starting the conversation "with something like, 'I am feeling frustrated and uncomfortable with the amount of information you are sharing with your sister,'" and then ask if he is willing to cut back on how much he reveals to her.

See More: [The Dos and Don'ts of Getting in Good with His Family](#)

Have a face-to-face conversation with your sister-in-law.

"Scheduling a face-to-face discussion over lunch, coffee or a dessert, takes the animosity out of it," explains Mandel. "Food is a great de-stressor." Begin the conversation with what's bothering you most, then proceed with no more than your top three concerns. Needle cautions that you should "start by telling your sister-in-law how important your relationship with her is and how you value your relationship with her." Then, don't "inundate the sister-in-law with criticism," Mandel warns. "Introduce the discussion that with the purpose of clearing the air in order to become even closer. And ask the sister-in-law if she has any concerns herself to level the playing field here. No one wants to feel attacked or cornered. This is about [relationship building](#) — not winning!"

Know you may have to let it go.

Yes, it's important to be heard and to try to [set boundaries](#) you're comfortable with. However, if your sister-in-law is unwilling to take a step back or becomes angry that you addressed your concerns, "you can reduce the situation to absurdity to let it go by pretending this is a sitcom," suggests Mandel. "Humor is a great stress reliever. Or, you can reframe the situation with kindness and compassion as you are two women in love with the same man. Reframe the story with generosity of spirit and forgiveness. Always exercise vigorously before you see her as you will shed stress hormones and feel more relaxed with a 'so what!' attitude."

