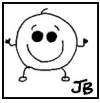


**Note to Reader:**

I have made these worksheets available for download because this (unbound) 8.5" x 11" size is more practical to use than the smaller (bound) pages in my book, A Wife's Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband's Loyalty Without Killing His Parents. These worksheets are meant to be used in conjunction with my book, so please don't use them until you have read it.

Thank you!

Jenna D. Barry



## Problem Issue #1: PHONE CALLS

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am the husband. I would rather go to the opera than fill out this worksheet, but I'm doing it anyway because I love my wife.

1. Whenever the topic of phone calls comes up, my wife says/does these things that make me want to buy her a bouquet of poison ivy:
  - She complains that my parents call too early, too late, and too often.
  - She screens their phone calls when she is too busy to talk to them.
  - She doesn't return my parents' phone calls immediately.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. If my parents were the bosses of the universe, these are the rules they would make about calls:
  - "Our son and his wife should answer the phone every time we call, even if they are busy eating dinner, bathing the kids, exercising, etc."
  - "Our son and daughter-in-law should cheerfully answer the phone regardless of what time of the morning or night we call, because we are family."
  - "Our son and his wife should never screen our calls, even if we call at inconvenient or inappropriate times."
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. If I were Boss of the Universe, these are the rules I would make about phone calls:
  - My parents would only call once a week instead of everyday.
  - I would call my parents when I *wanted* to instead of when I thought I *should*.
  - My wife and I would answer the phone every single time the phone rings even if we are busy doing something else at the time.
  - I wouldn't answer phone calls while I was eating a meal, putting the kids to bed, entertaining friends, in the middle my favorite TV show, sleeping, having sex, or driving.
  - My wife and I would answer my parents' phone calls at any time of morning or night regardless of our needs.
  - My parents wouldn't call before 9AM or after 10PM.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If I decided to be Mr. Loving Husband (instead of Boss of the Universe), I would consider some of the following compromises with my wife:
  - "You don't like for my parents to call after 8PM, and I don't mind if they call until midnight. Let's compromise and start letting the answering machine get it whenever people call us after 10PM."
  - "I'm willing to start screening calls from my parents during dinner and after 10PM. In exchange, I'd like for you to be nicer when you talk to them on the phone."
  - "It's fine with me if you prefer that my parents keep their calls between 8AM and 8PM, but you will have to be the one to tell them."
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and read your compromises aloud to each other. Negotiate until you agree on a fair solution. Take breaks if you need to get your emotions under control or you need to get a fresh perspective. Write the agreed upon solutions here. \_\_\_\_\_

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Now discuss the next two questions until you can reach an agreement.

5. How will we communicate this decision to my parents<sup>1</sup>?

- We will use caller ID and/or an answering machine to screen calls at inconvenient times.
- I'll call my parents when I want to talk to them, instead of calling them several times a week out of obligation.
- Instead of returning my parents' calls immediately, sometimes we will wait until the next day, or e-mail them instead.
- My wife will tell my parents we need for them to keep their calls before 10pm.
- I will tell my parents we need for them to stop calling before 8am in the morning.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and anticipate as a couple how your parents might react to your new behavior. (For instance, they might say, "I don't see why we can't call whenever we want to...we're family.")

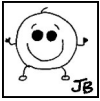
6. Here's what we will do if my parents have a negative reaction<sup>2</sup>:

- I will be respectful and loving toward my parents, but I will stand firm and repeat our needs to them without backing down even if they are disappointed, hurt, or angry.
- We will chicken out and let them dictate when we should and shouldn't call them and/or answer their calls.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>1</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled "Illegal Crack" (the section called 'Good Things To Say To Your Parents') from the book, A Wife's Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband's Loyalty Without Killing His Parents by Jenna D. Barry.

<sup>2</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled "Illegal Crack" (the section called 'Appropriate Things To Say If Your Parents Have A Bad Reaction') from the book, A Wife's Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband's Loyalty Without Killing His Parents by Jenna D. Barry.



## Problem Issue #2: VISITS AT OUR HOUSE

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am the husband. I would rather stick my head in a bucket of hot oil than fill out this worksheet, but I'm doing it anyway because I love my wife (even though she drives me crazy).

1. Whenever the topic of a visit from my parents comes up, my wife does these things that make me want to leave her in the desert with no water:
  - She says it's an inconvenient time to have my parents come visit.
  - She flies off the handle when my parents invite themselves over or show up unexpectedly on our doorstep.
  - She complains that my parents visit too often and too long.
  - She wants my parents to stay in the guest room (or a hotel) instead of our bedroom.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. If my parents were the bosses of the universe, these are the rules they would make about visiting our house:
  - "Our son and his wife should invite us to come visit them [every day / once a week / once a month] even if they would prefer to have us visit less often."
  - "Our son and daughter-in-law should welcome us into their home whenever we drop by unexpectedly, even if we show up at an inconvenient time."
  - "Our son and his wife should allow us to stay for at least [3 hours / 3 days / 3 weeks] when we come to visit, even if they would prefer our visits to be shorter."
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. If I were Boss of the Universe, these are the rules I would make about visits:
  - My parents would come visit us [once a week / once a month / once a year] and stay for [one hour / one day / one week].
  - My parents would call first instead of just dropping by.
  - If my parents invited themselves over at an inconvenient time, we would feel free to say, "Sorry but this isn't a good time for us."
  - My wife and I would allow my parents to come visit us whenever they wanted to, regardless of our needs, because I think it's better to do things out of obligation than to be honest with them about our needs.
  - My parents would stay in the guest room (or hotel) instead of our master bedroom when they came to visit.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If I decided to be Mr. Loving Husband (instead of Boss of the Universe), I would consider some of the following compromises<sup>3</sup> with my wife:
  - "How about if I promise not to pressure you to invite my parents over more than [twice a year] if you promise not to complain about it when they come then."
  - "We don't have to invite my parents here in [April] since it's not good timing for you, but how about if I invite them to come in [May]?"
  - "I know you don't want my parents to stay for a whole week. How about if they stay for just the weekend?"

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<sup>3</sup> These compromises will vary depending on several factors such as how far away your parents live, whether or not you have kids, your work schedule, etc.

- ❑ “Since you don’t want my parents to come to our house, what would you think of meeting them somewhere between our house and theirs?”
- ❑ “You don’t like the idea of my parents coming to visit us next week, but how would you feel if I told them we needed for them to stay in a hotel?”
- ❑ “I’m willing to \_\_\_\_\_ if you’re willing to \_\_\_\_\_.” (For example: I’m willing to do the cooking and the dishes every day for a week if you’re willing to invite my parents to our house on my mom’s birthday weekend.”)
- ❑ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and read your compromises aloud to each other. Negotiate until you agree on a fair solution. Take breaks if you need to get your emotions under control or you need to get a fresh perspective. Write the agreed upon solution(s) here. \_\_\_\_\_

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Now discuss the next two questions until you can reach an agreement.

5. How will we communicate this decision to my parents<sup>4</sup>?

- ❑ I will call my parents and respectfully tell them that it’s not convenient for us to have them come visit [this weekend / next month] but that they are invited to come [next weekend / next month] instead.
- ❑ My wife will call my parents and tell them they are welcome to come visit in November, but we need for them to stay for just the weekend instead of the whole week.
- ❑ When my parents get to our house, I’ll carry their luggage into the guest bedroom instead of our room.
- ❑ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and anticipate as a couple how your parents might react to your new behavior. (For instance, your dad might say, “We’ve already decided when we are coming for a visit, so you’re going to have to cancel your plans.”)

6. Here’s what we will do if my parents have a negative reaction<sup>5</sup>:

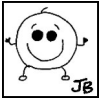
- ❑ I will hold strong to what my wife and I agreed upon even if my parents try to make me feel guilty, inconsiderate, selfish, or unloving for having needs that conflict with theirs.
- ❑ If my parents insist on being in charge of deciding how long they will stay or where they will sleep, etc., then we will tell them they either need to comply with our requests or they are not welcome to come at all<sup>6</sup>.
- ❑ We will chicken out and let them dictate when they will come to our house, how long they will stay, and where they will sleep.
- ❑ I will betray my wife by (a) letting my parents talk me out of the solution(s) we agreed upon and/or (b) blaming her for upsetting my parents.
- ❑ Other \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>4</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled “Illegal Crack” (the section called ‘Good Things To Say To Your Parents’) from the book, A Wife’s Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband’s Loyalty Without Killing His Parents by Jenna D. Barry.

<sup>5</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled “Illegal Crack” (the section called ‘Appropriate Things To Say If Your Parents Have A Bad Reaction’) from the book, A Wife’s Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband’s Loyalty Without Killing His Parents by Jenna D. Barry.

<sup>6</sup> If they still insist on making all the rules about visits, you may need to do something drastic like move farther away. No measure is too drastic if it means saving your marriage.



### Problem Issue #3: MOVING

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am the husband. I would rather watch figure skating all day than fill out this worksheet, but I'm doing it anyway because I think it may lead to seeing my wife naked.

1. Whenever the topic of moving comes up, my wife does these things that make me want to force her to get a tattoo that reads, "I'm a jerk":
  - She says she doesn't want to live so close to my parents.
  - She says she hates it when my parents constantly drop by unexpectedly.
  - She complains that my parents intrude into our lives.
  - She says I spend too much time at my parents' house.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. If my parents were the bosses of the universe, these are the rules they would make about us moving away:
  - "Our son and his wife should live in the same town as us, even if they would prefer to move farther away."
  - "Our son and daughter-in-law should live close to us, even if it would be better for their marriage if there was some distance between us."
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. If I were Boss of the Universe, these are the rules I would make about moving:
  - I would move to [a bigger town / the mountains].
  - My parents would support our decision to move farther away and assure us that they would get along fine without us.
  - My parents wouldn't accuse me of neglecting or abandoning them.
  - My wife and I would allow my parents to decide where we should live because our marriage isn't important.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If I decided to be Mr. Loving Husband (instead of Boss of the Universe), I would consider some of the following compromises with my wife:
  - "I want to live within 30 minutes of my parents, and you want to live in another state. How about if we move about four hours away from them?"
  - "I want to live close to my parents and you want to live close to yours. How about if we move somewhere in between them?"
  - "How about if for the next six months, (a) I/we will visit with my parents less often and (b) I'll start making your needs a priority over my parents' needs. After that trial run, we can evaluate whether or not it would be better for our marriage if we moved away."
  - "I'm willing to \_\_\_\_\_ if you're willing to \_\_\_\_\_." (For example: I'm willing to quit working for my parents if you're willing to live here for at least another two years.)
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and read your compromises aloud to each other. Negotiate until you agree on a fair solution. Take breaks if you need to get your emotions under control or you need to get a fresh perspective. Write the agreed upon solution(s) here. \_\_\_\_\_

Now discuss the next two questions until you can reach an agreement.

5. How will we communicate this decision to my parents<sup>7</sup>?

- I will call my parents and tell them that we have decided to move to a place where we have always wanted to live.
- We will tell my parents in person we have decided to move to [Montana].
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and anticipate as a couple how your parents might react to your new behavior. (For instance, your dad might say, “Your mother will be devastated if you move away.”)

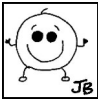
6. Here’s what we will do if my parents have a negative reaction<sup>8</sup>:

- I will be respectful and loving toward my parents, but I will stand firm and repeat our decision to them without backing down even if they are disappointed, hurt, or angry.
- I will hold strong to what my wife and I agreed upon even if my parents try to make me feel guilty, inconsiderate, selfish, or unloving for having needs that conflict with theirs.
- We will chicken out and let them dictate when they can visit us and where we should live.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>7</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled “Illegal Crack” (the section called ‘Good Things To Say To Your Parents’) from the book, [A Wife’s Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband’s Loyalty Without Killing His Parents](#) by Jenna D. Barry.

<sup>8</sup> See For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled “Illegal Crack” (the section called ‘Appropriate Things To Say If Your Parents Have A Bad Reaction’) from the book, [A Wife’s Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband’s Loyalty Without Killing His Parents](#) by Jenna D. Barry.



## Problem Issue #4: VISITS AT THEIR HOUSE

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am the husband. I would rather become a ballerina than fill out this worksheet, but I'm doing it anyway because I'm tired of my wife bugging me about it.

1. Whenever the topic of visiting my parents comes up, my wife does these things that make me wish I had married a goat:
  - She complains that we visit my parents too often.
  - She complains about having to stay at my parents' house for longer than a couple of days.
  - She is mean to my parents and me when we are at their house.
  - She says she wants to stay at a hotel instead of at my parents' house.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. If my parents were the bosses of the universe, these are the rules they would make about visits:
  - "Our son and his wife should come visit us even if it is expensive or inconvenient for them to do so."
  - "Our son and daughter-in-law should always stay at our house when they come to visit, even if they would prefer to stay at a hotel or with friends."
  - "Our son and his wife should always meet our expectations about how often they visit and how long they stay."
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. If I were Boss of the Universe, these are the rules I would make about visits:
  - I would visit my parents when I *wanted* to instead of when I thought I *should*.
  - A typical visit with my parents would last [a couple of hours / a couple of days / a week].
  - My parents would take our needs into consideration instead of trying to make us feel guilty for not meeting their expectations.
  - My wife and I would allow my parents to decide how often we should visit and how long we should stay, even though we are adults with needs of our own.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If I decided to be Mr. Loving Husband (instead of Boss of the Universe), I would consider some of the following compromises<sup>9</sup> with my wife:
  - "I want to visit my parents for a week and you don't want to go at all. How about if we compromise and go for just the [day / weekend]?"
  - "I want for us to go to my parents' house and you want them to come here instead. How about if we meet them halfway between our houses and stay at a hotel?"
  - "I'm willing to \_\_\_\_\_ if you're willing to \_\_\_\_\_." (For example: I'm willing to remodel your bedroom closet like you've been wanting if you're willing to spend a week at my parents' house next month.)
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and read your compromises aloud to each other. Negotiate until you agree on a fair solution. Take breaks if you need to get your emotions under control or you need to get a fresh perspective. Write the agreed upon solution(s) here. \_\_\_\_\_

Now discuss the next two questions until you can reach an agreement.

<sup>9</sup> These compromises will vary depending on several factors such as how far away your parents live, whether or not you have kids, your work schedule, etc.

5. How will we communicate this decision to my parents<sup>10</sup>?

- I will call my parents and respectfully tell them that we won't be able to visit them this [weekend / month / year] but that maybe we can get together with them next [weekend / month / year].
- I will e-mail my parents and let them know we plan to stay at a hotel (or with friends) when we come to visit.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and anticipate as a couple how your parents might react to your new behavior. (For instance, your mom might say, "Linda's son visits her every week. Why can't you be more like him?")

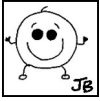
6. Here's what we will do if my parents have a negative reaction<sup>11</sup>:

- We will tell them we won't come to visit at all if they continue to insist on being in charge of deciding how often we come or how long we stay.
- We will chicken out and let them dictate how often we should visit them and how long we should stay.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>10</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled "Illegal Crack" (the section called 'Good Things To Say To Your Parents') from the book, [A Wife's Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband's Loyalty Without Killing His Parents](#) by Jenna D. Barry.

<sup>11</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled "Illegal Crack" (the section called 'Appropriate Things To Say If Your Parents Have A Bad Reaction') from the book, [A Wife's Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband's Loyalty Without Killing His Parents](#) by Jenna D. Barry



## Problem Issue #5: HOLIDAYS

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am the husband. I would rather run through a barbed wire fence than fill out this worksheet, but I'm doing it anyway because I'm a great husband.

1. Whenever the topic of holidays comes up, my wife does these things that make me want to fill her stocking with maggots:
  - She says she wants to spend Christmas at home with just the kids.
  - She says she doesn't want my parents to come to our house for Easter.
  - She says she doesn't want to go visit my parents for Thanksgiving.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. If my parents were the bosses of the universe, these are the rules they would make about holidays:
  - "Our son and his wife should spend Easter weekend with us even if they would prefer to do something else."
  - "Our son and his wife should come to our house for Thanksgiving even if they would rather have us over to their house instead."
  - "Our son and his wife should come see us for Christmas even if it is a big inconvenience and/or expense for them."
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. If I were Boss of the Universe, these are the rules I would make about holidays:
  - My wife would ignore her needs in order to please my parents and/or me.
  - My parents wouldn't expect us to get together for every holiday.
  - My parents would come visit us sometimes instead of expecting us to go to the trouble and expense of visiting them.
  - My wife and I would decide as a couple where to spend each holiday without worrying about whether or not my parents approved.
  - My wife and I would allow my parents to dictate where and when we should spend every holiday regardless of our feelings and needs.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If I decided to be Mr. Loving Husband (instead of Boss of the Universe), I would consider some of the following compromises<sup>12</sup> with my wife:
  - "I'm willing to spend Christmas with your parents if you're willing to invite my parents here for Easter."
  - "I'm willing to spend this Christmas at our house if you're willing to spend next Christmas at my parents' house."
  - "Let's make a list of all of the holidays during the year and then barter and negotiate with each other until we decide where and with whom we are going to spend them."
  - "I'm willing to \_\_\_\_\_ if you're willing to \_\_\_\_\_." (For example: I'm willing to take you to that play you've been wanting to see if you're willing to go to my parents' house for Thanksgiving.)
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>12</sup> These compromises will vary depending on several factors such as how far away your parents live, whether or not you have kids, your work schedule, etc.

Stop now and read your compromises aloud to each other. Negotiate until you agree on a fair solution. Take breaks if you need to get your emotions under control or you need to get a fresh perspective. Write the agreed upon solution(s) here. \_\_\_\_\_

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Now discuss the next two questions until you can reach an agreement.

5. How will we communicate this decision to my parents<sup>13</sup>?

- I will call my parents and respectfully say what we've decided to do for the holidays.
- We will tell my parents in person what we've decided to do for the holidays.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and anticipate as a couple how your parents might react to your new behavior. (For instance, they might say, "But we always spend [Easter] together and it won't be the same without you.")

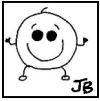
6. Here's what we will do if my parents have a negative reaction<sup>14</sup>:

- I will hold strong to what my wife and I agreed upon even if my parents try to make me feel guilty, inconsiderate, selfish, or unloving for having needs that conflict with theirs.
- We will chicken out and let them dictate where and with whom we should spend every holiday.
- I will betray my wife by (a) letting my parents talk me out of the solution(s) we agreed upon and/or (b) blaming her for upsetting my parents.

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<sup>13</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled "Illegal Crack" (the section called 'Good Things To Say To Your Parents') from the book, [A Wife's Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband's Loyalty Without Killing His Parents](#) by Jenna D. Barry.

<sup>14</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled "Illegal Crack" (the section called 'Appropriate Things To Say If Your Parents Have A Bad Reaction') from the book, [A Wife's Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband's Loyalty Without Killing His Parents](#) by Jenna D. Barry



## Problem Issue #6: VACATIONS

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am the husband. I would rather drill a hole in my head than fill out this worksheet, but I'm doing it anyway because I'm tired of fighting with my wife.

1. Whenever the topic of vacations comes up, my wife does these things that make me want to put piranhas in her bath water:
  - She says she doesn't want to spend our vacation with my parents.
  - She insists on spending our vacation with friends.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. If my parents were the bosses of the universe, these are the rules they would make about vacations:
  - "Our son and his wife should spend every vacation with us even if they would prefer to do something else."
  - "Our son and his wife should visit us once a year even though they have to use up all of their vacation time to do that."
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. If I were Boss of the Universe, these are the rules I would make about vacations:
  - My wife and I would spend our vacation where and with whom we pleased, without worrying whether or not my parents approve.
  - Sometimes I would spend my vacation [camping with my wife and kids] or [going hunting with the guys from work] or [visiting the world's largest ball of twine].
  - My wife and I would let my parents dictate how we should use our vacation time even though we are adults.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If I decided to be Mr. Loving Husband (instead of Boss of the Universe), I would consider some of the following compromises with my wife:
  - "How about if we spend half of our vacation with my parents and half with friends?"
  - "I want to spend our vacation with my parents and you want to spend it with friends. How about if we compromise and spend this year's vacation with my parents and next year's vacation with friends?"
  - "I'm willing to \_\_\_\_\_ if you're willing to \_\_\_\_\_." (For example: I'm willing to buy that dining set you've been wanting if you're willing to spend our vacation at my parents' house.)
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and read your compromises aloud to each other. Negotiate until you agree on a fair solution. Take breaks if you need to get your emotions under control or you need to get a fresh perspective. Write the agreed upon solution(s) here. \_\_\_\_\_

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Now discuss the next two questions until you can reach an agreement.

5. How will we communicate this decision to my parents<sup>15</sup>?

- I will call my parents and respectfully tell them we've decided not to spend our vacation with them this year.
- My wife will e-mail my parents and tell them we've decided to spend our vacation with her parents this year.
- My wife and I will tell my parents in person we have decided to spend our vacation [in Colorado with friends].
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and anticipate as a couple how your parents might react to your new behavior. (For instance, they might say, "But we won't get to see you at all this year if you don't spend your vacation with us.")

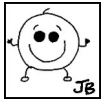
6. Here's what we will do if my parents have a negative reaction<sup>16</sup>:

- I will be respectful and loving toward my parents, but I will stand firm and repeat our decision to them without backing down even if they are disappointed, hurt, and/or angry.
- We will chicken out and let them dictate where and with whom we should spend all our vacations.
- I will betray my wife by (a) letting my parents talk me out of the solution(s) we agreed upon and/or (b) blaming her for upsetting my parents.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>15</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled "Illegal Crack" (the section called 'Good Things To Say To Your Parents') from the book, A Wife's Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband's Loyalty Without Killing His Parents by Jenna D. Barry.

<sup>16</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled "Illegal Crack" (the section called 'Appropriate Things To Say If Your Parents Have A Bad Reaction') from the book, A Wife's Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband's Loyalty Without Killing His Parents by Jenna D. Barry.



## Problem Issue #7: TRADITIONS

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am the husband. I would rather eat a box of thumbtacks than fill out this worksheet, but I'm doing it anyway because I love my wife (even though she belongs in an asylum).

1. Whenever the topic of traditions comes up, my wife does these things that make me want to shave her head while she's asleep:
  - She says she doesn't want to keep going to my parents' house every [Sunday] to [eat lunch with them].
  - She wants to start our own traditions instead of feeling obligated to follow my parents' traditions until we're old and gray.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. If my parents were the bosses of the universe, these are the rules they would make about traditions:
  - "Our son and his wife should meet with us every [Friday night] to [play cards] even if they would prefer to do something else with someone else."
  - "Our son and his wife should come to our house every [Sunday] for [lunch] even if they would prefer to meet somewhere else."
  - "Our son and his wife should always follow our traditions and never create their own."
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. If I were Boss of the Universe, these are the rules I would make about traditions:
  - My wife and I would get together with my parents when we wanted to, instead of feeling obligated to stick to a rigid routine.
  - My wife and I would allow my parents to dictate our schedule, instead of being honest with them about our needs.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If I decided to be Mr. Loving Husband (instead of Boss of the Universe), I would consider some of the following compromises<sup>17</sup> with my wife:
  - "It's fine with me if we stop meeting my parents every [Friday], but I don't have the courage to tell them. Would you?"
  - "I want to [watch football] with my parents on [Monday nights] and you don't. How about if I go to my folks' house on [Monday nights] while you go [hang out with your girlfriends]?"
  - "I'm willing to start a new tradition of taking you on a date once a month if you're willing to get together with my parents every other month."
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and read your compromises aloud to each other. Negotiate until you agree on a fair solution. Take breaks if you need to get your emotions under control or you need to get a fresh perspective. Write the agreed upon solution(s) here. \_\_\_\_\_

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Now discuss the next two questions until you can reach an agreement.

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<sup>17</sup> These compromises will vary depending on several factors such as how far away your parents live, whether or not you have kids, your work schedule, etc.

5. How will we communicate this decision to my parents<sup>18</sup>?

- My wife will call my parents and tell them we can't get together this [Friday] to [play cards] and then ask if they would like to get together one day next month to see a movie.
- When my parents invite us to come over to their house for [dinner] on [Saturday], I'll suggest meeting at a restaurant instead.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and anticipate as a couple how your parents might react to your new behavior. (For instance, your mom might say, "I guess you just don't have time for us anymore.")

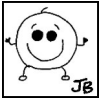
6. Here's what we will do if my parents have a negative reaction<sup>19</sup>:

- I will be respectful and loving toward my parents, but I will stand firm and repeat our needs to them without backing down even if they are disappointed, hurt, or angry.
- We will chicken out and let them dictate when and where we should get together and what activity we should do at that time.
- I will betray my wife by (a) letting my parents talk me out of the solution(s) we agreed upon and/or (b) blaming her for upsetting my parents.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>18</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled "Illegal Crack" (the section called 'Good Things To Say To Your Parents') from the book, [A Wife's Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband's Loyalty Without Killing His Parents](#) by Jenna D. Barry.

<sup>19</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled "Illegal Crack" (the section called 'Appropriate Things To Say If Your Parents Have A Bad Reaction') from the book, [A Wife's Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband's Loyalty Without Killing His Parents](#) by Jenna D. Barry.



## Problem Issue #8: ADVICE

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am the husband. I would rather eat a bowl of dirt than fill out this worksheet, but I'm doing it anyway because otherwise my wife won't leave me alone.

1. Whenever the topic of advice comes up, my wife does these things that make me want to tie her to a tree covered with army ants:
  - She hates it when my parents advise us on how we should spend our time and money.
  - She gets furious when my parents interfere with our decisions.
  - She asks me to stop giving my parents details about our [finances] and [sex life].
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. If my parents were the bosses of the universe, these are the rules they would make about advice:
  - "Our son and his wife should never make a decision without first asking us what they should do."
  - "Our son and his wife should always take our advice about everything (even though they are adults who are capable of making their own decisions)."
  - "Our son and his wife should share details of their [finances] and [sex life] with us."
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. If I were Boss of the Universe, these are the rules I would make about advice:
  - My parents wouldn't give advice about how I should spend my time and money.
  - My wife and I would make decisions about how to spend our time and money without worrying whether or not my parents approve.
  - My parents would only offer advice when we ask for it.
  - My wife and I would let my parents make all of our decisions even though we have the right to make our own choices and the responsibility to accept the consequences.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If I decided to be Mr. Loving Husband (instead of Boss of the Universe), I would consider some of the following compromises with my wife:
  - "How about if I stop asking for my parents' advice about everything and you stop complaining that they give too much advice?"
  - "I'll try to start seeking the advice of other people instead of always relying on my parents to help me make decisions. In exchange, I'd like for you to be open to hearing their advice when it comes to subjects that they are knowledgeable about."
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and read your compromises aloud to each other. Negotiate until you agree on a fair solution. Take breaks if you need to get your emotions under control or you need to get a fresh perspective. Write the agreed upon solution(s) here. \_\_\_\_\_

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Now discuss the next two questions until you can reach an agreement.

5. How will we communicate this decision to my parents<sup>20</sup>?

- I'll stop asking for my parents' advice about everything and instead I'll only ask for their advice occasionally.
- We'll start making decisions as a couple even if my parents don't approve.
- We'll avoid bringing up topics that tend to make my parents offer advice.
- The next time my parents pressure us to take their advice, I'll say "Thanks for your input but we've decided to do something else."
- The next time my parents ask me about [our finances] or [sex life], I'll say, "That's something we'd like to keep private."
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and anticipate as a couple how your parents might react to your new behavior. (For instance, they might say, "We are just trying to help you.")

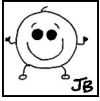
6. Here's what we will do if my parents have a negative reaction<sup>21</sup>:

- We will be respectful and loving toward my parents, but we will make our own decisions even if they are disappointed, hurt, or angry with us for doing so.
- I will hold strong to what my wife and I agreed upon even if my parents try to make us feel guilty, inconsiderate, selfish or unloving for not accepting their advice.
- We will apologize profusely even though we have done nothing wrong.
- We will chicken out and let them make all of our decisions for us.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>20</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled "Illegal Crack" (the section called 'Good Things To Say To Your Parents') from the book, [A Wife's Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband's Loyalty Without Killing His Parents](#) by Jenna D. Barry.

<sup>21</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled "Illegal Crack" (the section called 'Appropriate Things To Say If Your Parents Have A Bad Reaction') from the book, [A Wife's Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband's Loyalty Without Killing His Parents](#) by Jenna D. Barry.



## Problem Issue #9: FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am the husband. I would rather eat a spider than fill out this worksheet, but I'm doing it anyway because I'm tired of hearing my wife nag me about being financially dependent on my parents.

1. Whenever the topic of financial independence comes up, my wife does these things that make me want to burn all of her shoes:
  - She complains about having to live in my parents' house.
  - She says she doesn't want my parents to watch our kids every day.
  - She pressures me to stop working for my parents.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. If my parents were the bosses of the universe, these are the rules they would make about our finances:
  - "Our son and his wife should remain financially dependent on us even though they are capable of providing for themselves."
  - "Our son should continue to work for us even if he would rather work elsewhere."
  - "Our son and daughter-in-law should let us make the decisions about who should provide their childcare even though they are the parents."
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. If I were Boss of the Universe, these are the rules I would make about our finances:
  - My wife and I would become financially independent from my parents.
  - My wife and I would remain financially dependent on my parents for the rest of our lives.
  - I would stop working for my parents and look for a job I loved.
  - I would work for my parents for the rest of my life even though (a) it causes tension in my marriage and (b) I'd rather work elsewhere.
  - We would not accept money or a gift from my parents if it were given with the intent to control us.
  - My wife and I would allow ourselves to be controlled by my parents' money and/or gifts.
  - My wife and I would decide who would provide childcare, and my parents would respect our decision.
  - My wife and I would allow my parents to decide who should provide childcare, even though it's our decision and our children.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If I decided to be Mr. Loving Husband (instead of Boss of the Universe), I would consider some of the following compromises with my wife:
  - "I'm willing to pay my parents what we owe them if you're willing to pick up some overtime shifts at work for the next couple of months."
  - "If you're willing to live with my parents for one more month, I'm willing to go with you to look for a place of our own."
  - "I'll start looking for another job if you stop saying my parents are controlling."
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and read your compromises aloud to each other. Negotiate until you agree on a fair solution. Take breaks if you need to get your emotions under control or you need to get a fresh perspective. Write the agreed upon solution(s) here. \_\_\_\_\_

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Now discuss the next two questions until you can reach an agreement.

5. How will we communicate this decision to my parents<sup>22</sup>?
- We will pay my parents the money we owe them and then use banks for future loans.
  - I will respectfully tell my parents we will be moving out of their house at the end of the month.
  - When my parents give us money or a gift with strings attached, we will clarify their motives and then decide whether or not to accept it.
  - My wife will call my parents and tell them we have decided to change our daycare arrangements.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

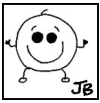
Stop now and anticipate as a couple how your parents might react to your new behavior. (For instance, they might say, “You should just be grateful for our money and gifts instead of refusing to accept our help.”)

6. Here’s what we will do if my parents have a negative reaction<sup>23</sup>:
- I will hold strong to what my wife and I agreed upon even if my parents try to make us feel guilty, ungrateful, or rude for wanting financial independence.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>22</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled “Illegal Crack” (the section called ‘Good Things To Say To Your Parents’) from the book, [A Wife’s Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband’s Loyalty Without Killing His Parents](#) by Jenna D. Barry.

<sup>23</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled “Illegal Crack” (the section called ‘Appropriate Things To Say If Your Parents Have A Bad Reaction’) from the book, [A Wife’s Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband’s Loyalty Without Killing His Parents](#) by Jenna D. Barry.



## Problem Issue #10: CHILDREN

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am the husband. I would rather take a knitting class than fill out this worksheet, but I'm doing it anyway because my wife is very persuasive.

1. Whenever the topic of children comes up, my wife does these things that make me want to throw a dirty diaper at her:
  - She gets really mad at my parents when they offer advice or criticize our parenting decisions.
  - She refuses to take their advice.
  - She gets mad at me when I let my parents decide how we should raise our kids (such as what religion they should be taught, how they should dress, and how they should be disciplined).
  - She hates it when my folks compete with her parents for their grandchild's love and attention (by buying expensive gifts and/or complaining that the other grandparents get to see the kids more often than they do).
  - She complains every time my parents drop by to see the kids.
  - She gets furious when my parents refuse to observe the rules we have for our kids (such as what they can eat, how much TV they can watch, and bedtime).
  - She hates it when my parents tell me things that imply she's not a very good mother (such as "I don't think she dressed the baby warm enough" or "breast feeding is much healthier than bottle feeding").
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. If my parents were the bosses of the universe, these are the rules they would make about their grandkids:
  - "We are entitled to visit our grandkids whenever we want to, even if it interferes with the needs of our son and his wife."
  - "We have the right to make all of the parenting decisions (discipline methods, religious upbringing, etc.) about our grandkids even though we are not the parents."
  - "We can ignore the rules our son and his wife have set for their kids."
  - "We should get to see our grandkids just as much or more than the other set of grandparents get to see them."
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. If I were Boss of the Universe, these are the rules I would make about our kids:
  - My wife and I would make parenting decisions as a couple without worrying whether or not my parents approved.
  - My parents would support our parenting methods instead of offering constant advice.
  - My parents wouldn't criticize the way we raise our kids.
  - My parents would encourage our kids to respect our authority by observing the rules we have for them.
  - My parents would wait for an invitation or at least call before dropping by to see their grandkids.
  - My parents would behave maturely instead of engaging in childish competition with the other set of grandparents.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If I decided to be Mr. Loving Husband (instead of Boss of the Universe), I would consider some of the following compromises with my wife:
  - "I'll stop insisting that we follow my parents' advice if you stop complaining that they give too much advice."
  - "I'm willing to tell my parents to stop criticizing our parenting methods if you're willing to stop criticizing my parents in front of the kids."

- “I’m willing to talk to my folks about observing our rules if you’re willing to let them spend time with the kids next weekend.”
- “If you’re willing to speak to my parents in a respectful tone, I’ll back you up when you tell them that they need to wait for an invitation before they show up.”
- “I’m willing to talk to my folks about competing over the kids if you’re willing to talk to your folks about it too.”
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and read your compromises aloud to each other. Negotiate until you agree on a fair solution. Take breaks if you need to get your emotions under control or you need to get a fresh perspective. Write the agreed upon solution(s) here. \_\_\_\_\_

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Now discuss the next two questions until you can reach an agreement, write down the solutions you’ve agreed on, and read the solutions aloud to each other.

5. How will we communicate this decision to my parents<sup>24</sup>?

- I will stop discussing parenting issues with my folks.
- We’ll tell my folks that we expect them to respect the rules we have for our kids and that there will be consequences if they don’t.
- If my parents criticize our parenting methods in front of our kids, then I will give them a warning. If they do it again, I will either leave (with the kids) or ask them to leave.
- I will ask my parents to stop [giving our kids expensive gifts] or [keeping track of which grandparents get to see our kids more].
- I will tell my folks that I’m not willing to listen to them criticize my wife behind her back and that in the future I expect them to confront her directly.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and anticipate as a couple how your parents might react to your new behavior. (For instance, they might say, “You would be wise to listen to our advice because we have more experience raising kids than you do.”)

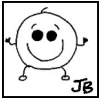
6. Here’s what we will do if my parents have a negative reaction<sup>25</sup>:

- We will stand firm and follow through on our parenting decisions even if they don’t approve or they try to make us feel guilty, disrespectful, or foolish for not taking their advice.
- We will restate our needs (about visits, rules, gossip, competitiveness, etc.) again without backing down even if they get upset.
- We will let them decide how to raise our kids even though we are the parents.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>24</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled “Illegal Crack” (the section called ‘Good Things To Say To Your Parents’) from the book, [A Wife’s Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband’s Loyalty Without Killing His Parents](#) by Jenna D. Barry.

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## Problem Issue #11: ELDER CARE

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am the husband. I would rather have my limbs removed than fill out this worksheet, but I'm doing it anyway so my wife won't bug me until the day I die.

1. Whenever the topic of taking care of my elderly parents comes up, my wife does these things that make me want to put *her* into a nursing home:
  - She refuses to let my parents come live with us.
  - She complains that I spend too much time taking care of my parents.
  - She says she doesn't have time or energy to take care of my parents by herself.
  - She accuses my parents of exaggerating their illnesses to manipulate us.
  - She wants to move my parents to a place where they can get the professional care they need.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. If my parents were the bosses of the universe, these are the rules they would make about their elder care:
  - "Our son and his wife should be our primary caregivers even if they don't have the time, energy, or knowledge required to do so."
  - "Our son and daughter-in-law should let us move in with them even if they don't have room."
  - "Our son and his wife should neglect their marriage, kids, careers, social lives, health, housework, and yard work in order to take care of us."
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. If I were Boss of the Universe, these are the rules I would make about taking care of my elderly parents:
  - My parents wouldn't insist we do things for them that they are perfectly capable of doing for themselves.
  - I would help my parents with the things I wanted to help with, and then hire professionals to help them with the things I don't want to help with.
  - My parents would be willing to consider all of the elder care options available and realize our needs are just as important as theirs.
  - My wife and I would allow my parents to guilt us into neglecting our own needs in order to tend to all of theirs.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If I decided to be Mr. Loving Husband (instead of Boss of the Universe), I would consider some of the following compromises<sup>26</sup> with my wife:
  - "I'm willing to drive my mom to the doctor this week if you're willing to take her next week."
  - "If you're willing to call my parents every afternoon to see if they are okay, then I'm willing to check on them every morning and ask the kids to check on them every evening."
  - "If you're willing to take my dad grocery shopping on Fridays then I'm willing to pick up the kids from school."
  - "I'm willing to take you on a vacation if you're willing to find a reputable elder care facility where we can leave my parents for a week."
  - "I'm willing to take my folks to an adult daycare center on Tuesdays and Thursdays if you're willing to take care of them on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays."

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<sup>26</sup> These compromises will vary depending on several factors such as how far away your parents live, whether or not you have kids, your work schedule, etc.

- “I’m willing to go with you to talk to a geriatric care manager and/or physician about where my parents should live, if you are willing to schedule an appointment with someone reputable.”
- “I’m willing to read a book about elder care if you’re willing to find a good one for me.”
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and read your compromises aloud to each other. Negotiate until you agree on a fair solution. Take breaks if you need to get your emotions under control or you need to get a fresh perspective. Write the agreed upon solution(s) here. \_\_\_\_\_

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Now discuss the next two questions until you can reach an agreement.

5. How will we communicate this decision to my parents<sup>27</sup>?
- I will call my dad and tell him that I will take him to the grocery store this week and that I have asked his neighbor Eileen to take him next week.
  - I will call my mom and let her know that I won’t be coming over this weekend to do her yard work, but that I hired a boy in her neighborhood to start mowing her lawn (or shoveling snow from her driveway).
  - I will visit my parents and make their house safe for them so they can enjoy their independence for as long as possible (instead of moving them into our house or a nursing home).
  - My wife and I will visit my folks and ask them whether they would prefer to move to an assisted living facility or have us hire a homecare worker to come live with them.
  - My wife and I will tell them we’d like to take them to visit a nice place (an adult home) where they could meet new friends, get to do fun activities, *and* have someone else do the cooking for them.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

Stop now and anticipate as a couple how your parents might react to your new behavior. (For instance your mom might say, “Be a good son and let me move in with you so that I won’t be so lonely.”)

6. Here’s what we will do if my parents have a negative reaction<sup>28</sup>:
- I will be respectful and loving toward my parents, but I will stand my ground even if they are disappointed, hurt, or angry.
  - I will hold strong to what my wife and I agreed upon even if my parents try to make me feel guilty, inconsiderate, selfish, or unloving for having needs that conflict with theirs.
  - We will cave under pressure and agree to all of their demands even if it destroys our marriage, health, and social life.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>27</sup> For ideas on specific sentences to use with your parents, see the chapter entitled “Illegal Crack” (the section called ‘Good Things To Say To Your Parents’) from the book, [A Wife’s Guide To In-laws: How To Gain Your Husband’s Loyalty Without Killing His Parents](#) by Jenna D. Barry.

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