

# 14

## Dealing with Toxic In-Laws Clinical Practice Workbook

A clinically branded, function-preserving edition retaining the original exercises, psychoeducation, checklists, logs, planning tools, and response space.

DSM-5-TR · ICD-11 CLINICAL ALIGNMENT

1 · Assessment

2 · Recognizing Toxic Behavior

3 · Analyzing Past Interactions for Patterns

4 · Recognizing Your Emotional Triggers

5 · Identifying the Root Causes of Conflicts

6 · Overcoming Fear of Confrontation

7 · Negotiating Compromises

8 · Role-Playing for Conflict Scenarios

9 · Identifying Your Boundaries

10 · Non-Violent Communication Techniques

11 · Dealing with Criticism Constructively

12 · Handling Manipulative Tactics

13 · Setting Realistic Expectations

14 · Forgiveness

# How to use this workbook

- Use this workbook selectively and collaboratively; it is educational and does not replace individualized assessment, diagnosis, treatment, medical care, or crisis services.
- Skip, pause, or modify any activity that increases distress, danger, shame, or loss of functioning. Adapt language for culture, disability, neurodivergence, health, resources, and lived context.
- Ratings in this workbook are reflection tools unless a named, validated measure and interpretation are explicitly provided.

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## Assessment

The following are common signs of toxic in-laws behavior. Rate each statement on a scale from 1-5 (1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree”):

| Statement                                                                                               | Rate (1-5) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. “They constantly criticize my choices, no matter how small, making me feel inadequate.”              | 1-2-3-4-5  |
| 2. “I feel like I’m always walking on eggshells around them, afraid of setting off an argument.”        | 1-2-3-4-5  |
| 3. “They disregard my boundaries and often make decisions for me without my consent.”                   | 1-2-3-4-5  |
| 4. “I notice they talk about me behind my back, spreading negativity to other family members.”          | 1-2-3-4-5  |
| 5. “They try to manipulate my partner against me, creating a divide in our relationship.”               | 1-2-3-4-5  |
| 6. “I feel emotionally drained after spending time with them, as if they feed off creating drama.”      | 1-2-3-4-5  |
| 7. “They refuse to acknowledge or apologize for their hurtful actions, always playing the victim.”      | 1-2-3-4-5  |
| 8. “They use guilt-tripping tactics to control my actions and decisions.”                               | 1-2-3-4-5  |
| 9. “I sense a lack of privacy, as they intrude into our personal life, demanding to know every detail.” | 1-2-3-4-5  |
| 10. “They enforce unrealistic expectations on me, and I can never seem to meet their standards.”        | 1-2-3-4-5  |

**AUTHOR-CREATED REFLECTION:** Describe specific behaviors and context; do not total responses or label a person “toxic” from this checklist.

## Recognizing Toxic Behavior

1. Describe the toxic behaviors you've observed. Include specific examples to illustrate these behaviors. The following are some examples. Check off the ones that you've experienced or add more to the list:

- ☐ **Constant Criticism:** Criticizing your parenting style, career choices, appearance, or lifestyle constantly.
- ☐ **Undermining Your Relationship:** Making comments or taking actions that undermine your relationship with your partner.
- ☐ **Invasion of Privacy:** Snooping through your belongings, personal spaces, or private conversations.
- ☐ **Guilt-Tripping:** Making you feel guilty for not meeting their expectations or demands.
- ☐ **Manipulation:** Using emotional manipulation to influence your decisions or behaviors.
- ☐ **Gaslighting:** Making you doubt your memories, perceptions, or sanity.
- ☐ **Passive-Aggressiveness:** Expressing negative feelings indirectly rather than openly discussing them.
- ☐ **Comparison:** Comparing you unfavorably to others, including your spouse's ex-partners or other family members.
- ☐ **Boundary Crossing:** Disregarding your stated boundaries about personal space, visitation, or parenting.
- ☐ **Excessive Demands:** Expecting you to always conform to their plans, traditions, or expectations without consideration for your needs.
- ☐ **Verbal Abuse:** Using insults, name-calling, or derogatory comments.

- ☐ **Financial Pressure:** Pressuring you to give or lend them money, or criticizing your financial decisions.
- ☐ **Exclusion:** Intentionally excluding you from family events or conversations.
- ☐ **Overstepping Parental Boundaries:** Interfering with how you raise your children, including contradicting your rules or making decisions without your consent.
- ☐ **Playing the Victim:** Portraying themselves as the victim in any conflict to gain sympathy and deflect blame.
- ☐ **Scapegoating:** Blaming you for family issues or problems.
- ☐ **Sabotaging Plans:** Intentionally sabotaging plans or events that are important to you.
- ☐ **Mocking or Belittling:** Making fun of your interests, beliefs, or aspirations.
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- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
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2. Identify any recurring patterns. Do these behaviors happen at certain times, with specific people, or under particular circumstances?

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# Analyzing Past Interactions for Patterns

## 1. Documenting Interactions

- List down specific interactions with your in-laws that felt negative or toxic. Include dates and locations if possible.

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- For each interaction, describe the behaviors exhibited by your in-laws that contributed to the negativity.

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- For each interaction, note how you responded, both externally (what you said or did) and internally (how you felt).

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## 2. Identifying Patterns

- Based on the interactions listed, identify any common triggers that seem to precipitate toxic behavior. Triggers could include specific topics, events, or actions. The following are some examples. Check off the ones that apply or add more to the list:

- ☐ **Holidays and Special Occasions:** High expectations and stress around holidays.
- ☐ **Family Milestones:** Events like births, weddings, or graduations that can trigger jealousy or competitive behaviors.
- ☐ **Life Changes:** Major life changes in your family, such as moving, job changes, or new additions.
- ☐ **Perceived Slights:** Small, unintended actions or comments that are perceived as disrespectful or insulting.
- ☐ **Independence:** Displays of independence or self-sufficiency.
- ☐ **External Stressors:** Stress from outside the family, such as work pressures or financial troubles.
- ☐ **Discussions About the Future:** Planning for future events or making long-term decisions can trigger attempts to control.
- ☐ **Cultural or Religious Differences:** Differences in beliefs or practices can lead to criticism or exclusion.
- ☐ **Parenting Choices:** Decisions about child-rearing can lead to criticism.
- ☐ **Financial Decisions:** Discussions or decisions about finances.
- ☐ **Lifestyle Choices:** Choices about lifestyle, diet, or hobbies.
- ☐ **Social Gatherings:** Social events or gatherings, especially with people outside the family.
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- Identify any patterns in your responses to your in-laws' behavior. Consider whether your responses tend to escalate or de-escalate the situation.

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### **3. Reflecting on Impact**

- Reflect on the emotional impact these interactions have on you. How do they affect your mood, self-esteem, and overall well-being?

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2. Consider how these interactions impact your relationship with your partner and other family members.

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# Recognizing Your Emotional Triggers

## 1. Identifying Emotional Triggers

- Think of specific times when you felt upset, angry, hurt, or frustrated after an interaction with your in-laws. Write down as many instances as you can remember.

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- For each instance listed, describe the feelings you experienced. Try to be as specific as possible (e.g., instead of "upset," you might specify "humiliated," "ignored," or "overwhelmed").

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- Look at each instance and try to pinpoint what exactly triggered these feelings. Was it a specific word, tone of voice, topic of conversation, or action?

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## 2. Understanding Triggers

- Review your list of triggers and feelings to identify any patterns. Do certain themes recur, such as feeling disrespected, excluded, or criticized?

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- Reflect on why these specific triggers have a strong emotional effect on you. Do they remind you of past experiences, conflict with your values, or touch on insecurities?

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- Note any physical or emotional responses you have to these triggers (e.g., heart racing, feeling hot, wanting to cry). Recognizing these can help you become more aware of when you're being triggered in the moment.

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### 3. Developing Strategies

- For each trigger identified, brainstorm calming techniques or coping strategies that you could use to manage your emotional response in the moment. The following are some suggestions:

- ☐ **Time Out:** Take a break from the situation to gather your thoughts and calm down.
- ☐ **Deep Breathing:** Practice slow, deep breaths to calm the nervous system.
- ☐ **Guided Imagery:** Visualize a peaceful scene or a place where you feel safe and relaxed.
- ☐ **Positive Affirmations:** Repeat positive statements about yourself to counter negative thoughts or feelings.
- ☐ **Physical Exercise:** Engage in physical activity to reduce stress and improve mood. Even a short walk can help.
- ☐ **Journaling:** Write down your thoughts and feelings to process them more clearly.
- ☐ **Grounding Techniques:** Use sensory experiences to ground yourself in the present, such as holding a cold ice cube or smelling a favorite scent.
- ☐ **Listening to Music:** Play calming or uplifting music.
- ☐ **Reading:** Lose yourself in a good book to take a break from stress.
- ☐ **Laughter Therapy:** Lighten your mood by watching a funny video.
- ☐ **Hot Bath or Shower:** Use warmth to relax your muscles.
- ☐ **Focused Distraction:** Engage in an activity that requires concentration, such as puzzles or knitting, to divert your attention.
- ☐ **Pet Therapy:** Spend time with a pet.
- ☐ **Deep Pressure Touch:** Use a weighted blanket or hug yourself tightly to create a sense of security.

| Trigger | Coping strategies |
|---------|-------------------|
|         |                   |

## Identifying the Root Causes of Conflicts

### 1. Conflict Inventory

- Write down specific conflicts you have experienced with your in-laws. Try to recall as many details as possible, including what was said and done by all parties involved.

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- Write what you believe was the immediate cause or trigger of the conflict. This could be a comment, action, or misunderstanding.

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### 2. Analyzing Underlying Issues

- Reflect on whether external factors, such as stress, health issues, financial pressures, or cultural differences, might be contributing to these conflicts.

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- For each recurring issue identified, ask yourself why this issue leads to conflict. What underlying needs, values, or expectations are not being met?

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- Consider the overall relationship dynamics with your in-laws. How might historical grievances, unresolved issues, or patterns of interaction be contributing to conflicts?

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- Assess how communication (or lack thereof) plays into these conflicts. Are misunderstandings, assumptions, or communication styles at the heart of some disputes?

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### 3. Brainstorm Solutions:

- For each root cause identified, brainstorm potential ways to address the issue. The following are some suggestions. Check off the ones that may be helpful or add more to the list:

- ☐ **Open Communication:** Start with honest, open communication about the issues at hand, without placing blame.
- ☐ **Family Meetings:** Organize family meetings to discuss conflicts and misunderstandings in a neutral, structured environment.
- ☐ **Boundaries Setting:** Clearly define and communicate your boundaries regarding acceptable behavior and your expectations.
- ☐ **Seeking Compromise:** Look for compromises that respect both parties' needs and limits while addressing the core issues.
- ☐ **Counseling or Therapy:** Consider family counseling or individual therapy to address deeper relational issues and develop healthier communication patterns.
- ☐ **Clarifying Misunderstandings:** Actively work to clarify any misunderstandings that may have contributed to the conflict.
- ☐ **Positive Reinforcement:** Acknowledge and reinforce positive interactions, encouraging a shift towards healthier dynamics.
- ☐ **Avoiding Triggers:** Identify and try to avoid known triggers for toxic behavior, when possible.
- ☐ **Creating a Support Network:** Build a support network outside of the family dynamic to provide perspective and support.
- ☐ **Encouraging Independence:** Encourage independence from toxic in-laws when necessary, allowing for space and autonomy in your family unit.
- ☐ **Modeling Respectful Behavior:** Model the respectful, considerate behavior you wish to see, setting a positive example.

- ☐ **Avoiding Escalation:** Implement strategies to de-escalate conflicts before they intensify, such as taking time-outs or using calming techniques.
- ☐ **Utilizing Written Communication:** In some cases, using written communication can help clarify thoughts and feelings without the immediacy of confrontation.
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- For each feasible solution, identify potential obstacles you might face in implementing it and think of ways to overcome these obstacles.

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- Choose one or two solutions to implement as a starting point. Outline specific steps you will take, resources you might need (e.g., List people (e.g., your partner, friends, a therapist) and resources (e.g., books, online forums)).

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## Overcoming Fear of Confrontation

### 1. Understanding Your Fear

- What exactly are you afraid of when it comes to confrontation with your in-laws? Is it their reaction, the potential for conflict escalation, or the fear of not being understood?

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- Consider any past confrontations that might be influencing your fear. What happened, and how did it make you feel?

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- Think about the consequences of avoiding confrontation. How does avoidance affect your relationship with your in-laws, your partner, and your personal well-being?

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## 2. Changing Your Perspective on Confrontation

- Try to reframe confrontation not as a conflict but as a constructive dialogue. What positive outcomes can arise from addressing issues directly?

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## 3. Building Your Confrontation Skills

- Practice assertive communication skills. Start with small, low-stakes situations to build your confidence. Assertiveness involves expressing your thoughts and feelings respectfully and standing up for your rights.

The following are some examples:

- If your in-laws suggest visiting at a time that doesn't work for you, propose an alternative, "We have plans this Saturday morning. Could we meet in the afternoon instead?"
- If you're asked to take on more than you can handle, delegate tasks politely, "I won't be able to manage everything on my own this time. Can we divide the tasks? I can take care of [specific task]."
- When faced with a critical comment, respond calmly and affirm your choices, "I understand you might have done things differently, but I'm happy with how I've chosen to do this."
- If in-laws tend to overstay their welcome, set expectations in advance, "We're excited to see you! Just a heads-up, we'll need to wrap up by 8 PM since we have an early start the next day."

COERCION/VIOLENCE SCREEN: Before contact, confrontation, negotiation, repair, or forgiveness, assess retaliation, stalking, financial dependence, child/dependent safety, and intimate-partner violence. Offer private, indirect, or no-contact alternatives.

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- Before engaging in confrontation, clearly outline your points. Know what you want to say, including specific examples and how the situation makes you feel.

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- With a trusted friend or partner, role-play potential confrontation scenarios. Practice your responses and get feedback.

# Negotiating Compromises

## 1. Identifying Conflict Areas

- Write down specific areas of conflict or disagreement you have with your in-laws. Focus on those that recur or cause significant stress.

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- For each conflict, try to understand and note down the perspective of your in-laws as well as your own. What are the underlying needs or concerns driving each side?

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## 2. Setting Goals for Compromise

- For each area of conflict, describe what an ideal compromise would look like for you. What are you hoping to achieve?

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- Indicate areas where you are willing to be flexible and those where you need to stand firm. This will help in identifying potential points of negotiation.

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### **3. Preparing for Negotiation**

- Plan how you will communicate your needs and listen to your in-laws. Consider using "I" statements, active listening, and avoiding accusatory language.

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- Try to anticipate how your in-laws might respond to your proposals. Consider their possible concerns and how you might address them.

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# Role-Playing for Conflict Scenarios

## 1. Identifying Scenarios

- Write down a specific scenario or topic that have led to or could lead to conflict with your in-laws. Focus on one that is recurrent or particularly challenging.

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- Define what a successful outcome would look like for you. Consider what you realistically want to achieve (e.g., setting a boundary, expressing your feelings, reaching a compromise).

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- Decide who will play each role in the role-play exercise. If you're preparing alone, you might write out responses or imagine the interaction. If you have a partner or friend to practice with, assign roles.

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## **2. Role-Play Exercises**

- Begin the role-play by simulating the typical start of the conflict scenario.
- Practice your planned responses, focusing on your objectives. Try different strategies, such as "I" statements, active listening, and assertiveness.
- Experiment with different ways of handling the situation, including de-escalation techniques, seeking compromise, and setting boundaries.
- If practicing with another person, switch roles. This can provide insight into the perspectives and motivations of your in-laws.

## **3. Reflection and Feedback**

After each role-play exercise:

- Note what felt effective and what didn't. Were there moments you felt unprepared for? How did you feel emotionally?

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- If you practiced with someone, ask for their feedback on your responses and overall approach. What did they think was effective? What could be improved?

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# Identifying Your Boundaries

## 1. Understanding Boundaries

- Identify different types of boundaries you believe are important. The following are some common examples. Check off the ones that apply or add more to the list:

- ☐ **Visitation Boundaries:** Specifying when and how often in-laws can visit your home.
- ☐ **Communication Preferences:** Establishing preferred methods and frequency of communication.
- ☐ **Parenting Decisions:** Making it clear that parenting decisions are to be respected and not interfered with.
- ☐ **Holiday Plans:** Setting expectations about holiday visits and celebrations in advance.
- ☐ **Personal Space:** Asserting the need for personal space and time alone or with just your immediate family.
- ☐ **Cultural Practices:** Establishing boundaries around cultural or religious practices and celebrations.
- ☐ **House Rules:** Implementing specific house rules for visits, such as smoking policies or pet accommodations.
- ☐ **Social Media Boundaries:** Setting guidelines for what is acceptable to share or post about you and your family.
- ☐ **Personal Belongings:** Setting rules about the use or borrowing of personal belongings.

## 2. Identifying Needed Boundaries

- Think about past interactions with your in-laws that made you uncomfortable, upset, or stressed. What boundaries were crossed?

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- Based on your reflections, list the specific boundaries you need to establish or reinforce with your in-laws.

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## 3. Implementing Boundaries

- Plan how you will communicate these boundaries. Consider the language you'll use and the setting that's most appropriate for this discussion.

*Examples:*

- ☐ *"I find I'm most responsive to texts during my busy days. Would you mind using those to reach out?"*
- ☐ *"Sometimes, I need some quiet time to recharge. It's not personal, and I hope you understand my need for occasional solitude."*
- ☐ *"We're cautious about what's shared on social media, especially about [child's name]. Let's discuss what we're comfortable posting online."*

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-Think about potential reactions from your in-laws and how you will handle them.

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- Determine what steps you will take if your boundaries are not respected. This could include limiting contact or seeking external support.

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## Non-Violent Communication Techniques

Non-Violent Communication (NVC) techniques, developed by Marshall B. Rosenberg, focuses on expressing our needs and feelings without blame or judgment, fostering empathy and understanding.

### 1. Principles of NVC

- **Observations:** Describe the situation objectively without judgment.
- **Feelings:** Express how the situation makes you feel.
- **Needs:** Identify the needs or values that are connected to your feelings.
- **Requests:** Make a clear request for action that can meet the needs or values identified.

### 2. Scenarios

- Think of a recent conflict or uncomfortable interaction with your in-laws.

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- **Observation:** What specifically happened? Describe the facts as if you were a camera recording the event.

*Example: "I've noticed you've been coming over without calling first."*

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- **Feeling:** How did you feel during this interaction? Name the emotion.

*Example: "This makes me feel stressed and unprepared."*

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- **Need:** What need of yours was not being met? Identify the underlying need or value.

*Example: "I need privacy and respect for our family's schedule."*

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- **Request:** What could you have asked for that might have improved the situation? Formulate a request, not a demand.

*Example: "Would you be willing to call and arrange visits in advance?"*

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### 3. Anticipating Responses

For request you've prepared, consider possible responses from your in-laws, both positive and resistant. Plan how you could respond empathetically.

*Example:*

- *If receptive: "Thank you for understanding. How can we make this work for both parties?"*

- *If resistant: "It sounds like you're worried about losing spontaneity. How can we balance that with the need for planning?"*

**- If receptive:**

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**- If resistant:**

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# Dealing with Criticism Constructively

## 1. Understanding Criticism

- Note the difference between constructive criticism (aimed at helping you improve) and destructive criticism (aimed at belittling or undermining you). Provide an example of each from your experience.

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- Reflect on how you typically react to criticism from your in-laws. Do you get defensive, withdraw, or react angrily? Note these reactions.

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## 2. Analyzing Recent Criticism

Choose a recent instance of criticism from your in-laws and analyze it using the following framework:

- What exactly was said? Try to recall the words without interpreting or judging them.

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- What was the context in which the criticism was given? Consider the setting, timing, and potential motivations.

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- Is there any truth to the criticism? Can anything constructive be derived from it?

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### **3. Strategies for Handling Criticism**

For the instance of criticism analyzed above, outline how you could handle similar situations more constructively in the future:

- List techniques you can use to maintain composure when criticized (e.g., deep breathing, taking a moment before responding).

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How can you demonstrate active listening, even if the criticism is hard to hear? Consider nodding, maintaining eye contact, and paraphrasing.

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- Write down open-ended questions you can ask to clarify the criticism and understand it better.

*Examples:*

- *"What would you have done differently in this situation?"*
- *"How does this situation affect you or others?"*
- *"What outcome are you hoping for by sharing this feedback?"*

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- How can you express your feelings and perspective respectfully? Use "I" statements to communicate how the criticism makes you feel without blaming.

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#### **4. Learning from Criticism**

- Based on the criticism, what can you learn? Are there behaviors or aspects you genuinely want to improve?

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- If the criticism has merit, outline steps you can take to address the issue or improve yourself.

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## **5. Protecting Your Well-being**

- If criticism becomes abusive or harmful, how can you set boundaries to protect yourself? Consider what boundaries might look like and how you can communicate them.

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## Handling Manipulative Tactics

### 1. Identifying Common Manipulative Tactics

The following are some examples of manipulative tactics. Identify any personal experiences related to these tactics.

**Guilt-Tripping:** Making you feel guilty to get what they want.

- Example: "After all we've done for you, you can't even do this one thing for us?"

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**Gaslighting:** Making you doubt your perceptions or sanity.

- Example: "You're imagining things. That never happened."

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**Triangulation:** Using another person to communicate with you, often to create discord or confusion.

- Example: Telling your spouse something about you instead of directly addressing you, hoping to create tension.

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**Passive-Aggressiveness:** Expressing negative feelings indirectly rather than openly discussing them.

- *Example: backhanded compliments, sarcasm, etc.*

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**Victim Playing:** Portraying themselves as the victim to deflect blame and gain sympathy.

- *Example: "You always make me out to be the bad guy."*

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**Withholding:** Withholding affection, information, or resources as a means of control.

- *Example: Not speaking to you because you made a decision they didn't like.*

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## **2. Developing Counterstrategies**

- For each type of manipulative tactic, brainstorm boundaries that could protect you from manipulation.

Examples:

- *Clearly understand your non-negotiables and communicate that threats or ultimatums are not acceptable ways to resolve conflicts.*
- *Seek external validation if necessary and limit engagement in conversations that make you doubt your reality.*
- *Decide not to engage or escalate.*

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- Identify people or resources (e.g., a therapist, supportive friends or family, self-help books) that can help you deal with manipulative behavior.

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# Setting Realistic Expectations

## 1. Reflecting on Current Expectations

- Write down what you currently expect from your relationship with your in-laws. Consider aspects like communication, support, involvement in your life, and respect for boundaries.

*Example: I hope for emotional support during significant life events and understanding during difficult times.*

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- Reflect on where these expectations come from. Are they based on societal norms, your family background, or your desires for familial relationships?

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## 2. Evaluating the Reality

- Compare your current expectations with the actual behavior and track record of your in-laws.

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- Consider how differences between your expectations and reality have affected your emotional well-being and your relationship with your partner and in-laws.

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### **3. Setting Realistic Expectations**

- Based on your evaluation, adjust your expectations to more closely align with reality. Be specific about what you can realistically expect in terms of behavior and interaction.

*Example: I will appreciate the support when it aligns with our needs and boundaries but also seek support from my chosen support network.*

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- Shift your focus from changing your in-laws to managing your responses and setting healthy boundaries. Outline actions you can take to protect your well-being.

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## Forgiveness

### 1. Reflecting on Your Feelings

- Think about your feelings towards your toxic in-laws. List any negative emotions you hold, such as anger, resentment, or hurt.

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- Consider how these emotions affect your life and relationships. How do they influence your interactions with your in-laws, your partner, and others?

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### 2. Considering Forgiveness

- Identify any barriers that prevent you from forgiving your in-laws. These might include ongoing toxic behavior, lack of apology, or the depth of your hurt.

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- Imagine what forgiveness might look like in your situation. What would need to change in your feelings or thoughts? How might your life be different if you were able to forgive?

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### **3. Steps Towards Forgiveness**

- Acknowledge the hurt and harm caused by your in-laws. Recognizing your pain is a crucial step towards healing.

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- Attempt to see the situation from your in-laws' perspective. This isn't about excusing their behavior but understanding the complexity of human actions.

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- Make a conscious decision about whether you're ready to forgive.

Remember, forgiveness is a process and may take time.

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## 4. Forgiveness Strategies

- Write a letter to the person you're forgiving (without necessarily sending it) to express your feelings and the act of letting go.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

- Use visualization to let go of grudges and resentments:

1. Choose a quiet, comfortable place where you won't be disturbed. Sit or lie down in a relaxed position, close your eyes, and take a few deep breaths to center yourself.
2. Bring to mind the person you want to forgive. Try to picture them as clearly as possible. It might be helpful to imagine them in a neutral setting, where you feel safe and in control.
3. Acknowledge the feelings you have towards this person, without judgment. Recognize your hurt, anger, or resentment as valid emotions. Allow yourself to feel them for a moment.
4. Visualize your grudge or resentment as a physical object or symbol. It could be a dark cloud, a heavy stone, chains, or anything that resonates with you. Notice how it feels to carry this weight.
5. Imagine yourself holding this symbol of your grudge. Now, visualize offering it to the person you wish to forgive. You might see yourself handing it over, placing it down at their feet, or even just showing it to them. As you do this, say in your mind or out loud, "I forgive you for [specific action or behavior]. I am releasing this burden."
6. Picture the symbol dissolving, breaking, or otherwise disappearing. This represents letting go of the grudge and the hold it has on you. Feel the weight lifting from your shoulders.
7. In the place of the grudge, visualize a warm, soothing light or energy. This light represents forgiveness, peace, and emotional healing. Let it fill you up, healing any wounds left by the resentment.

8. Focus on the sensation of lightness and relief that comes with forgiveness. Remind yourself that this act of forgiveness is for your peace and well-being, not an exoneration of the other person's actions.

9. Take a few moments to sit with your feelings after the visualization. Reflect on any shifts in your emotional state or any insights you gained during the process.

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# 2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

## Classification status

- DSM-5-TR: No standalone DSM-5-TR diagnosis under the workbook title · educational/contextual topic unless a separately assessed disorder applies
- ICD-11 CDDR: No dedicated ICD-11 CDDR mental-disorder code under the workbook title · educational/contextual topic unless another coded condition is established
- This workbook is non-diagnostic. A title, checklist, or completed activity never establishes a diagnosis.

## Pages requiring the updated interpretation

- The audit identified source pages 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 24, 37, 41. The statements below supersede incompatible diagnostic, scoring, safety, or resource wording on those pages.

## Diagnostic and differential limits

- Use Dealing with Toxic In-Laws material to support assessment or intervention planning, not to assign a diagnosis. Evaluate duration, severity, clinically significant distress or impairment, developmental and cultural context, medical/substance causes, exclusions, and relevant differentials.

## Document-specific corrections

- Keep Dealing with Toxic In-Laws explicitly non-diagnostic; its exercises organize experience and goals but do not establish a mental disorder or causal explanation.
- Supersede diagnostic-sounding scoring on pages [1, 2, 3, 4, 14]: disclose whether each tool is validated or author-created, remove unsupported thresholds, and separate symptom monitoring from diagnosis.
- Replace crisis wording on pages [2] with the current U.S. 988 call/text/chat pathway, 911 or nearest emergency department for immediate danger/medical emergency, and a direction to use verified local services outside the United States.

## Measures, scoring, and permissions

- Pages [1, 2, 3, 4, 14] contain named, implied, or author-created screening/rating content . These scores are not diagnostic unless the exact instrument, version, validation population, administration, and interpretation are established. Identify provenance for every item set and scoring rule. Obtain publisher permission/license when required; otherwise remove cutoffs and label it as a nonvalidated reflection checklist, or replace it with a properly licensed measure without altering its wording/scoring.

## Intervention scope and contraindications

- Use Dealing with Toxic In-Laws activities as psychoeducation and structured reflection, not diagnosis or a stand-alone treatment plan. Adapt or stop any exercise that worsens distress, functioning, conflict, pain, or dissociation, and escalate care according to the actual presentation.

## Crisis and current resources

- For Dealing with Toxic In-Laws, use: ·If there is immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department. In the U.S., call or text 988 or use 988lifeline.org for 24/7 crisis support. Outside the U.S., use verified local emergency and crisis services.· Verify all topic-specific agencies and links at publication.

## Authoritative references

- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/updates-to-dsm/updates-to-dsm-5-tr-criteria-text>
- <https://www.psychiatry.org/getmedia/b68a5776-f88c-45c7-9535-fd219d7aa5cb/APA-DSM5TR-Update-September-2025.pdf>
- <https://icd.who.int/browse/2026-01/mms/en>
- <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077263>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/988>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/national-behavioral-health-crisis-care>

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- <https://988lifeline.org/>