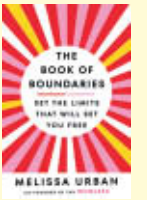


Fab DAILY

HOMES & FAMILIES

With rumours of a feud between Victoria Beckham and son Brooklyn's wife Nicola, author **MELISSA URBAN** has tips on improving relationships with in-laws



HOW TO AVOID THE VICINIC RIFT

BROOK OF LOVE
... proud mum
Posh with her
eldest son



NEW MRS B...
Brooklyn poses
with his bride,
Nicola



SPECULATION of a feud started when Victoria 48, allegedly went silent on Nicola, 27, after offering to design her wedding dress.

Brooklyn, 23, has since come out saying that Nicola is his "No1 priority" and that they "have each other's back 100 per cent".

It's not a unique situation, with parents said to be a cause of conflict for 60 per cent of couples.

Author Melissa Urban says setting boundaries before trouble brews is key to a healthy relationship with your in-laws.

Here are her ten ways to keep the peace when tensions run high.

DON'T BITE YOUR TONGUE

IF issues with the in-laws arise, the best place to start is an honest conversation with your partner. Share your feelings about the ways they negatively impact you and your family.

Try to find a compromise. This might be setting a reasonable limit on the number of days your in-laws stay with you – or offering to pay for a hotel so they can be nearby.

HANDLE YOUR OWN PARENTS

YOU and your partner need a united front, but should each handle your own parents. If you implement rules,

By **CLAIRE DUNWELL** and **NATASHA HARDING**

you and your partner must agree to implement them together but it's your partner's job to handle the conversation with their own parents on both of your behalf.

This may be uncomfortable for your partner, so you may need to encourage and support them in laying the boundaries.

RATE YOUR ANNOYANCES

WHEN issues crop up, ask yourself on a scale of 1 to ten, how much do things bother you.

Do you care that your mother-in-law drops by without calling? If so, where do you rate it? Then ask your partner how they feel.

Decide at the same time, then reveal your answer.

If it bothers you a seven, but your partner only rates it at a three, that helps you set a mid-range boundary.

YOUR WAY OR NO WAY

YOUR parents, as well as your partners' parents, may feel like they're helping ease your burden by disciplining, correcting, or otherwise parenting your child.

But it's important to address this behaviour as early as possible, even as it's happening.

Start by explaining that you are the parent and your in-laws should sit back, relax and just enjoy being grandparents.

Explaining in front of your kid, "It's OK, Grandma, this is the way we do it at our house," can go a long way toward helping your child feel secure, while gently reminding grandparents that it's your house, your rules.

THEIR HOUSE, THEIR RULES

THINGS can get tricky when your kids spend time at Grandma and Grandpa's without you.

For instance, in our house, I let my son get out of bed and play at 6:30am, but Grandma wants him to stay in his room until 7am – and it's their house, their rules.

You may have to remind your parents and in-laws that though they disagree with your parenting style, it's your life and your child – and there comes a time for every grandparent's rite of passage: minding their own business.

CONFLICT? ... Nicola and mother-in-law Victoria



NEGOTIATE ON FAVOURS

IT'S normal for your parents and in-laws to want to help out – both financially and in day-to-day life. But you need to know where your boundaries lie.

For example, your in-laws might offer to pay for your wedding – but you might only want to accept that if you can plan it 100 per cent your way. You must express exactly that – or share what you are willing to negotiate.

It means you can meet expectations on both sides and set boundaries. For example, if you're repaying money they lent to you for your house, make it clear that the repayment is the exchange you agreed to – and doesn't come with unrestricted access to the house they helped you buy.

Have a level-setting conversation to set clear expectations and how you can move forward together.

START SMALL

YOU don't have to rush into the biggest, gnarliest, most family-dynamic-changing boundary first.

Practise with something less intimidating, gain a small win, and let that self-confidence and those experiences carry you over into the "please don't drive across the country without telling us you're coming," conversation.

CHOOSE YOUR TIMING WISELY

HAVE these conversations during a peaceful time, ideally outside of or before the anticipated boundary issue – so, before the baby is due, before they no-call-drop-by, before the holidays, and before you share your holiday plans.

BE PREPARED TO REPEAT

WITH relationships as long-standing as family, it's unlikely one boundary statement will change things for good.

If you're talking about changing deeply entrenched patterns of behaviour, be prepared to restate your boundary again.

Assume your family and in-laws want to be respectful, but allow them time to rewire their brains to accommodate this new dynamic.

IGNORE THEIR TANTRUMS

ALLOW your family and in-laws the opportunity to talk about it (but not to try to change your mind).

If your boundary is clear, kind, and designed to make the relationship better, other people's temper tantrums in response are not your business.

●Edited extract from *The Book of Boundaries* by Melissa Urban (Vermilion, £16.99) published on October 20.

Sam Brick
on how she
did just
that...over
the page