

A son-in-law is often treated as a hired man with little say in decision-making. This is more common in situations where a son also is involved in the business.

Younger party's perspective

The son or daughter (and spouse) should accept without resentment the fact that the parents have spent a lifetime developing the business and raising a family. They are now entitled to rest, travel, good furniture, etc.

Marriage spats are normal. But do not unduly burden the parents with your problems or expect them to take sides. If the business arrangement led to the disagreement, do not blame the parents.

If you are going into business with your parents, your spouse (rather than your parents) should be your confidant when working out troubles. Otherwise your spouse will begin to feel like an outsider.

Teach your children to enjoy their grandparents. But do not impose too much on the parents to take care of the children and prepare meals. Be discreet around your children so they are not carrying stories between the two homes.

Giving advice

Sometimes it is best not to communicate. Parental advice is motivated by excellent intentions. Parents do not want to see their children repeat parental mistakes. But that does not make advice any more palatable to the younger generation. If responsibility has been delegated to the younger party, he/she will look after it the best way possible or suffer the consequences. One of the best aids to family harmony, and one of the hardest to acquire, is a *firmly closed mouth*. It helps to remind the parents that it is more important in the long run to maintain cordial relations than to get a few more bushels per acre.

Family stressors

“In more than 20 years of consulting with farm families, I have learned that their most difficult stressors are other people, *not* the weather or markets,” said Jerry Robinson, Extension rural sociologist, University of Illinois.

Below are 10 areas, in order of importance, that Iowa farm families identified as causing stress in two-generation farm families.

- Living with tight money
- Farm taking priority over family
- Poor teamwork
- Differing time commitments
- Not being involved in family decisions
- Not being on our own
- Taking more risks than others
- Disagreements over spending
- Receiving criticism from family
- Feeling like hired labor

The same farm families were asked to identify coping strategies. Below are 10 strategies in order of importance that were identified by family members living in two-generation farm families.

- Spiritual belief
- Encouraging each other
- Flexibility
- Problem analysis
- Relaxation
- Diversionary activities
- Acceptance
- Physical activity
- Talk to other families
- Talk with relatives

. . . and justice for all

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