

Common Issues in Mixed Marriages

In today's globalized world, it has become very simple to meet people from all kinds of cultural backgrounds – and, sometimes, to fall in love. InterNations highlights common issues and different strategies to make your intercultural relationship or international marriage work!

It always makes sense to find out as much as possible about your partner's family but it makes special sense to do so in mixed marriages – especially concerning the culture and its traditional family structures.

"In Canada, the extended family isn't all that significant," Liz – who's married to an Indian guy – explains. "I mean, I see some of my family members maybe once a year, if that. Here in Jaipur, family is more important. My husband's parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and their in-laws are a fairly tight-knit bunch. Sometimes, I find this rather exhausting."

However, Liz was able to see the positive side of her mixed marriage as well. She became close friends with Rajesh's cousin Sumita (30), who helps her navigate a foreign culture and has become far more than a replacement for the friends Liz left behind in Ontario.

Marriage and Religion

Partners in mixed marriages may be supportive of each other's religious beliefs but still often run into unexpected issues. Differences in the way people in these marriages celebrate certain holidays or have dietary restrictions are to be expected. However, other problems may arise, which have a much bigger impact on the partners in mixed marriages.

Hans (42) always had a hard time understanding people with strong religious views. However, his personal situation became even more complex when he met his future wife.

"I'm a German expat who was sort of raised as a Lutheran-Protestant, but I became an atheist in my teens. Ruba's from Amman, in Jordan, and a practicing Muslim," Hans says.

"We often clash over specific issues, like food. It drives me crazy that she doesn't even let *me* cook pork. I think our arguments have gotten worse since the birth of our daughter. We weren't sure how to raise our kid. Whose traditions do we pass on?"

Parenting in Mixed Marriages

Mixed marriages often face additional struggles and challenges in the field of parenting. Raising a child always leads to conflicts if the parents are not on the same page. For parents in mixed marriages, like Hans and his wife, these conflicts often multiply.

"My friends here do not struggle as much as we do. But then again, they don't have to synchronize two different sets of cultural and religious backgrounds," Hans concedes. The involvement of extended family members in the child-rearing process, behavioral expectations, and the question of what is considered appropriate frequently cause heated discussions between Hans and Ruba.

"Interestingly enough, we have always found a compromise so far. Despite our different outlooks, it helps us to know that we both want the best for our child. It's not easy, but we have some common ground in that. For example, I agreed that Eman should be raised as a Muslim because her faith is very important to my wife. But I didn't want her grandparents to have too much of a say. For me, child-rearing is the parents' responsibility – and only theirs."

Your Partner's Personality

As in any relationship or marriage, both partners have to be flexible and open-minded when facing unexpected arguments and issues. "In mixed marriages, arguments may come up more often because of the different cultural backgrounds," Ruba says. "It's just a lot more challenging."

For instance, one partner's prevalent social attitudes and common prejudices may begin to show more openly one day. "When this happens, all you can do is to maintain a good-natured attitude and have lots of patience," Hans adds.

Resource:

<http://www.internations.org/magazine/international-marriage-and-relationships-15294/common-issues-in-mixed-marriages-2>