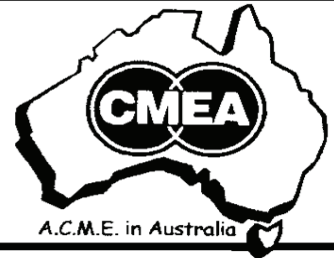

COUPLES FOR MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT AUSTRALIA NSW NEWSLETTER



March 2010

IN-LAWS

Love them or hate them or somewhere in-between?

By Gerlinde Spencer

There is no doubt that when you marry you not only acquire a spouse, you also find yourself with in-laws. How you feel about them and they feel about you will have some influence on your new relationship and to a certain extent help to shape it. There are a multitude of bad jokes to underline the difficulties in in-law relationships. Yet there are many marriages that have been blessed by the bringing together of the two families.

Expectations in the western world are very different to those in many countries around the globe, where the young couple are expected to live with the husband's family where the wife is expected to be subservient to her mother-in-law and often to the rest of the family members. Even where this does not happen in the physical sense and the newlyweds start their own home, family loyalties can demand that the husband puts his mother's wellbeing ahead of his wife's. Imagine having to live with that! It would certainly make for difficulties in such a marriage and could be the cause of a great deal of emotional pain.

When Ian and I trained four prospective Leader Couples for a Pentecostal Church in Mumbai some years ago the training group went to a depth we had never experienced before.

The cause? - Unresolved pain from their early marriages, for all of them in a non Christian context. Two of the stories were really extreme with the husbands not really aware of how much pain they had caused until their wives shared their story in the group. It was wonderful to see forgiveness asked for and given and the joy and closeness for each couple as a result. *We might not have had to deal with culturally condoned abuse from in-laws in our society but there may still be some situations to be shared with our partner, without blame or shame, so we can be healed in our own relationship.*

Recently I have been reading a book based on research conducted in Japan on how the present changes in Japanese society are affecting women over the age of 65. One of the areas which came up was that in a number of cases the relatively new daughter-in-law refused to continue living with her elderly mother-in-law, who was then ousted from her own home. These particular old women had been widowed some time before the marriage took place and mother and son had lived together on their own until he married. A number of these women had had a pretty tough life in their youth and demonstrated some real courage and resourcefulness in the face of



Such rejection— which in two cases also meant little if any access to their grandchildren. In a sense their generation had missed out at both ends, their early and middle life was spent caring for others and when it came to their turn the world had changed. I know of several women in our society who are denied access to their son's family in some form or other because of a hostile daughter-in-law. They had never expected to live with them but are left very lonely nevertheless.

Not everyone, thankfully, has such a story to tell. My parents largely gave their approval to our early engagement on the strength of their appraisal of Ian's parents. Ian was not impressed, but pleased that they liked each other and that we could count on getting married after his two years working for CSR in Queensland. During those two years my parents-in-law to-be became my surrogate family while I studied in Sydney a long way from home.

Continued Page 4

From the Editors

Ian writes...

I hope you are planning to come to the Conference! I believe the committee has put together a really top line group of speakers, workshops and experiences designed to get you talking and moving!!! Based upon initial enquiries, we are expecting a good response and our numbers will be limited by the venue, so let me encourage you get your registration in quickly. It would be very sad if some of our own members missed out because they took too long to decide. By the way, this is not a publicity beat up – space in the conference rooms is strictly limited!

We have chosen the theme of Dancing to try to reflect the complex reality of couple relationships. As marriage partners we all know something about the ways in which we move around each other; we have some awareness of the steps we repeat (some good, some bad); some of our dance is passionate and connected; some is almost mechanical; we know too that we sometimes fall over each other or put our big foot well and truly in the way. At the conference there are some great workshops designed to explore these themes.

For inspiration and motivation we have James Castrission and Justin Jones the two young men who paddled a kayak to New Zealand – that takes commitment, teamwork, trust and courage!

Al Stewart, well known Anglican cleric, and popular speaker, has some really important things to say to men in midlife. Al is a great communicator and he is passionate about men in midlife.

Dianne Ervine will lead us into the intimate and sexual side of our relationship. Her extensive practice as a marriage counsellor and workshop leader will insure a secure but challenging experience for us all.

And we want you to come dancing with us! To make it easier and more fun we have invited Karen Ambrose to show us how to do this dancing thing without treading on each others toes. It all sounds like a great night out at the Cabana Club.

So, make sure you come and share it with us.

Gerlinde & Ian



CMEA NSW CITY/COUNTRY CONFERENCE

16-18 APRIL 2010

“THE DANCE OF YOUR LIFE”

With Keynote Speakers, Workshop Options,
Fun and Dancing

HOTEL URBAN St. Leonards (near North Sydney)

Live in or visit

Go to [www. bettermarriages.org.au](http://www.bettermarriages.org.au) for updates

START DATING AGAIN AND SPICE UP YOUR MARRIAGE

DANCING LESSONS DATE

We continue our series based on the Arp's book, "52 Dates For You and Your Mate" and in the spirit of our upcoming Conference the focus in the next two suggested "dates" is on Dancing and Getting in Shape:

The Idea: Last Christmas we finally did it. We splurged and bought a new stereo system. For years we had used hand-me-down stereo equipment from our three sons. We've had so much fun listening to our old records and tapes, we wonder why we didn't do this sooner (*The Arp's book was published in 1993 - how much has changed since that time!*). Talk about musical memories - we've got them! Some of our records go way back to our college days and times of dancing cheek to cheek. (We were in the era of the Twist.)

Holidays often bring out the sillies in us and last Christmas was no exception. We began to show our family how our generation danced. We also showed ourselves that we could benefit from a

Dancing Lesson Date.

Take the First Step: Call Your Local Studio: Sounds great but how do we start? Our friend, Michele, suggested calling the local dance studios and asking if they had any specials. The studios also generally know if there any upcoming free dances or charity balls locally.

One hotel in our city hosts a free monthly tea dance with Swing music. Occasionally, if you are as lucky as Michele, local dance studios offer draws for a free one hour class lesson.

Shape Up by Square (or Bush!) Dancing: Other friends of ours love to square dance. But let us warn you, we recently went to a square dance and were completely exhausted after a couple of hours. Well after all, it serves us right. This is a Getting in Shape Date! What more can we say?



WORKOUT DATE

The Idea: It started with a back injury but led to a fun date. Would you believe that in our late forties we began working out at a fitness gym? Our adult children had a hard time believing their Mom was actually pumping iron. But she was, and she has continued her routine for the last two years.

Our Workout Dates actually started a couple of years ago when Claudia injured her back and required several months of therapy. Part of her therapy program was work out with light weights and do numerous exercises. Not only did this benefit her back, it helped her general physical condition so much that Dave decided (under duress) to join her.

Having lived on the cutting edge of stress and overload for so long, it seemed strange to take the time to work out together. We told ourselves we were doing this for Claudia's back and for our health. But we discovered we were also doing it for fun.

Talk to Your Physician: You can approach a Workout Date in several ways. Before you begin working out, however, check out any physical fitness program with your family doctor. Let him or her guide you in what is sensible and healthy for you.

Find a Program within Your Budget: As you begin, consider your budget and what you can invest in fitness training. There are many health clubs, aerobic programs and fitness centres. We go to a therapy centre for those who have been previously injured. Our strength trainer, Ed, guides us in what is safe and beneficial for us. Neither of us is into muscle building; we just want to stay healthy and have fun in the process.

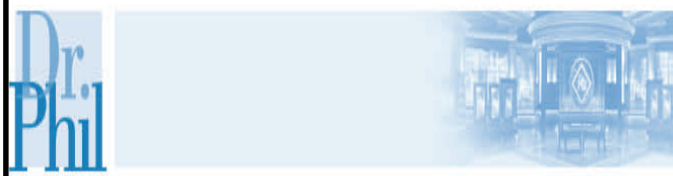
Work Out with Videos: Don't overlook workout videos. One couple who lives in Germany thinks videos are great. The American videos add a touch of home to their life.

A word of caution: This not a competitive date! Don't try to outdo each other. Relax, have fun and enjoy the fringe benefits of more energy and vigour. You may even discover being in shape will enhance your other dates - particularly the romantic ones!

(We, the editors can't resist adding that we continue to benefit from our twice weekly gym dates - scaled down from three a week after the first year - and find that treating the sessions as important dates helps us over the hump when we really don't feel like going!)

IN-LAWS

Love them or hate them or somewhere in-between?



Dad, as I called him, came with me to Ashfield Town Hall for my naturalization ceremony when I was 18 and the awkward afternoon tea with the other new Australian citizens and the mayor. To have done this on my own would have been difficult.

Mum, mothered me and taught me how to cook. I was staying at a hostel and loved being in their home when I could. For three weeks before my final exams in Occupational Therapy they invited me to come and stay while I studied non-stop. I just missed coming top of the course and put on a kilo or two - she made wonderful cakes and biscuits which helped with the study - but it was great. So when Dad died early in his retirement and Mum eventually had to be cared for because of her crippling arthritis, we moved into her home gladly to do just that.

Ian and I are also blessed in our daughter-in-law who loves to have holidays with us, happily shares her own life and our son's and her children with us, and is always glad when we come to stay. Our Austrian son-in-law's parents let us use their flat in Vienna once for five months while they stayed in their mobile home for their usual summer escape from the city and Opa collects us from the airport for the long trip to Vienna any time we come for another (shorter) visit.

We are blessed indeed and very grateful for our enlarged circle of love through marriage. If that is your story then we hope you take time to reflect on your good fortune and let the family members who bless you with their love and trust, know how much you appreciate it.

In closing - Dr. Phil has some pithy advice for couples who have in-law problems which will also give you some points to discuss with each other.

Gerlinde Spencer

Managing Your In-Laws

If you plan on sticking with your spouse, then you're also stuck with your in-laws. Here's Dr. Phil's advice for dealing with your new extended family.

- There can be no divided loyalties. When you get married and start your own family, that's where your primary loyalty needs to be.

- Good fences make good neighbors. Your in-laws need to be your neighbors and there need to be really good fences up. Set boundaries about when they are and are not invited into your lives.
- You've got a finite amount of physical and emotional energy. If you're in-laws are draining you, you may need to change the boundaries. Reassure them that you are not closing them out, you are simply focusing on yourselves.
- Once you've set boundaries, talk to your parents about them. They're not as fragile as you may think.
- The other woman in every man's life is his mother. If your husband starts in with: "Well my mother does it this way ..." then tell him to go over and sleep with her. (Ouch! - the Editors)
- If a wife has a problem with her mother-in-law, it's the husband who needs to step in and help fix it. Likewise, if a husband doesn't see eye-to-eye with his in-laws, his wife needs to step in. The person with the primary relationship (the son or daughter, not the in-law) needs to be the messenger.
- Negotiate with your own partner the role that you want your in-laws to have. Don't assume you're on the same page until you talk about it.
- Try not to criticize your spouse for his/her relationship with his/her parents. It may only lead to more clinginess or complications.
- You need to love your parents, and have a rich and active relationship with them, but any time that you turn away from your partner to resolve a relationship issue, that's a bad thing. If you have a problem in the marriage, you need to resolve it in the marriage.
- Keep in mind that your parents only know what you tell them. If you go to them every time you're angry and frustrated and having problems in your marriage, they hear that, but they don't hear when you make up.

Marriage Enrichment Exercise

OUR IN-LAWS

Read the lead article in this Newsletter, then set some time aside to complete the following in private. Share and dialogue with your partner to gain some greater understanding of yourself and each other.

What I like about your mother is.....

What I like about your father is.....

What I like about your is.....
(other important in-law)

What I find difficult in my relationship with your mother is

What find difficult in my relationship with your father is

What find difficult in my relationship with is
(other important in-law)

What I would like from you in this situation is.....

What would you like from me? (write down your partner's request after making sure you have understood what they need.)

What is CMEA?

Couples for Marriage Enrichment Australia is an organisation which exists to enhance and enrich the marital relationship between a man and a woman. CMEA officially began in 1980 and has members throughout Australia. Activities include weekend marriage enrichment retreats, shorter seminars and local support groups, training of marriage enrichment leader couples and the publication of regular newsletters. Some of these events are sponsored by community groups and churches.

The Newsletter uses material from a wide range of resources on marriage. The opinions expressed in any article, report or exercise do not necessarily reflect the views of all members of CMEA.

NSW & ACT Leader Couple News



Noeline and I have had a "handover" session with Gerlinde and Ian regarding the leader couple co-ordinator role. We will be in contact with each of you soon to confirm that we have the right contact details for each leader couple and to discuss some ideas to support you in your role.

One idea we have proposed to the NSW Committee is that we schedule two CMEA retreats a year (probably non-residential) in addition to those organised locally by leader couples and groups.

The purpose is to provide couples who want to attend a retreat but for which there are no experiences planned in their area, the opportunity to do so and also to provide opportunities for leader couples who have been trained, and are looking to build their experience, to co lead a retreat with another leader couple or lead a retreat themselves.

We would be interested in your feedback on this proposal and whether you would be potentially interested in being involved as leaders depending on availability.

Just a reminder of the following:

Please let Rob Corner have dates for your events to enter on the **website calendar** as soon as they are confirmed! And don't forget to give **at least two week's notice to the Spencers** when you order your retreat folders or have a request for Newsletters and brochures for non standard events.

Leader Couple Coordinators:

Noeline and Paul Drayton 02 96293324
ndrayton@tpg.com.au; pdrayton@tpg.com.au



Membership Application/Renewal

Membership is due on the 1st July each year

Please enrol/renew us as a Member couple.

- We'd like a one year membership at \$30*
- We'd prefer a two year membership at \$50*
- We'd also like to make a donation of \$.....*

Names of Husband and Wife (please print)

.....

Address.....

.....

Post Code Telephone

Email: _____

For Bankcard payment please complete the following:

Card Number _ _ _ _ _

Name on Card

Expiry Date Card Security Code _ _ _

Amount

Signature

Please send to:

The Treasurer Couple
CMEA NSW
3 Rock Lilly Close
Worrigeen NSW 2540

Thankyou for supporting the work of CMEA

CMEA NEW SOUTH WALES & ACT UPDATE

Calendar of Events 2010

For the latest dates and details check out
www.bettermarriages.org.au or phone the Retreat Contact
Couple, Gerlinde and Ian Spencer on 02 94364731.

March

19-20 Weekend Retreat (closed)
NOONAWEENA
Barry & Paula Davis

20 Mini-Retreat (closed)
Blakehurst Baptist
Derek & Ellen Yule

April

16-18 CITY/COUNTRY CONFERENCE
HOTEL URBAN,
St. Leonards, Sydney
Find our brochure on
www.bettermarriages.org.au

April/May

30-2 Adventist Marriage Enrichment
MACLEAN NSW (open)
Meredith & Peter Cousins
Enquiries: ring Paul & Jane
Richardson 02) 6645 2847

May

8 Morling College Mini-Retreat
Marsfield (closed)
Derek & Ellen Yule

13-15 Refresher & Enrichment Weekend)
"Rivendell" near Hall NSW (open)
Gary & Jennifer Strachan
(02) 6230 2570

Other Courses led by CMEA Leaders

M/E Overseas: Barry & Paula Davis

June 21-25 Couple work & Trauma Conference
Gulu, UGANDA

June 29-

July 2 M.E. at Anglican Bishop's
Retreat, UGANDA

Marriage Education

(pre-wedding, closed)
All Saints Hunter's Hill, Derek & Ellen Yule
November 7-8

Are you interested in more information?

Please contact any member of the Committee for
further details or enquiries regarding any of
these listed events.

We also would welcome enquiries about organising
an event and using CMEA accredited leaders.

PEOPLE TO CONTACT

NSW COMMITTEE 2009-2010

Chaircouple

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Secretary couple

Maggie and Ron De Rooy	(02) 4271 5320
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Treasurer & Membership

Linda and Rob Corner	(02)4422 1349
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Leader Co-ordinator Couple

Noeline and Paul Drayton	(02) 9629 3324
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Committee Couples

Grace and Stephen Mok	02 9980 8055
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Correspondence to:

3 Rock Lilly Close
Worrigeer NSW 2540

Retreat Contact Couple

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Editor Couple

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CMEA NSW NEWSLETTER

March 2010

Return Address: 3 Rock Lilly Close Worrigeer NSW 2540

*Inside this Issue: "...IN_LAWS" ; Dancing Lesson Date; Couple Exercise; News on CMEA events:
and more.*