ForeWord Reviews

FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS

The Ties That Bind and Bind and Bind: A Survival Guide to In-Law Relationships
Sylvia Bigelsen
Element Books
978-1-86204-487-6
(June 1999)

If only people met, fell in love, married (or similarly partnered) and rode off into the sunset, how simple life would be. Particularly if riding into the sunset entailed placing great distance between the happy couple and their families.

That picture is not realistic, and, certainly not even desirable. When a couple marries and joins two families, everyone's life can be enriched. Sometimes. For those who find themselves at odds with their in-laws comes The Ties That Bind from New Jersey family therapist Sylvia Bigelsen. Bigelsen, citing cases from her twenty-five years in marriage, divorce and family counseling, documents the many pitfalls that can arise when strangers become almost-instant families. Typical problem situations are discussed, such as when a mother is reluctant to give up her son to a woman she thinks is most unsuitable, but the author also covers at length some of the problems endemic to our times, the result of blended families. For example, what happens when a wife has not only in-laws, but ex-in-laws as well?

Bigelsen begins the book with advice for those contemplating marriage and moves to those newly married and on to those who are newly married again. At the end of every chapter she provides a to-do list for the couple and the parents, while a final chapter discusses what to do when all else has failed to produce any sort of harmony between family members. Related with great empathy and humor, one of the personal stories found in these pages is sure to strike a nerve. This is a book for those wishing to prevent or relieve the stress of strained relationships.

Vicki Gervickas