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My Son Won't Speak To Me As I Didn't Attend His Wedding—What Should I Do?

By [Alyce Collins](#) On 4/7/23 at 7:00 AM EDT

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Dear Newsweek, my son and his fiancée chose to have a destination wedding at Disney World, but partly due to the cost, I couldn't attend.

The couple decided they didn't want to get married locally. They felt the people who loved them would be willing to take vacation days and spend a great deal of money to attend their wedding. I admit I had a very low opinion of that expectation.

A busybody decided it was her place to tell a friend of the bride's mother that I wasn't going. She, in turn, told the mother. I hadn't planned on telling my son until just before the wedding. I didn't want to interfere with their plans.

My son said they would pay for my airline ticket and hotel, but still I told him I wouldn't be attending.

With uncontrolled spending, his father drove us into bankruptcy court for well over \$100,000. When he was younger, I'd had conversations with my son about his own problems with spending, and trying to get him to see where it could lead.

Additionally, the bride had lamented to my oldest son about her fiancé never having any money. No matter how much I tried to get him to see what uncontrolled spending could do, it never sank in. No way could I take part in putting them into the financial distress his father put us into.

To say what his father had done was a terrible experience would be an understatement. Going through bankruptcy was embarrassing and heart-breaking. I'm still dealing with PTSD from it, and that was 1998. I did not want to be part of that possibly happening to them.

His little sister was also in college, which I was helping pay for—her father was not. She doesn't drive so I drove her back and forth to classes at the local community college. She had classes the day of the wedding, so she couldn't attend either. She messed up her first semester of college so there was no way she could miss any classes and risk failing them too. Her having to repeat that semester had been a financial strain for me.

My estranged husband and son's father, was always one to try and make me look bad. He's said I didn't go to their wedding because I hate Florida.

No one took into consideration that not only couldn't I afford it, but I also wasn't physically able to make the trip. A half mile down the road and my back is killing me. I have fibromyalgia, so I get pain from that.

My husband, daughter, oldest son, the newlyweds, her parents, my brother-in-law, his two adult children, and his grandchild—all from out of town—got together at a local restaurant recently. My estranged husband gleefully told me I wasn't invited. My daughter didn't attend the wedding either, but she wasn't ostracized. I haven't had any contact with my son in almost three years. What should I do?

Cappy, Maryland

[Newsweek's "What Should I Do?"](#) offers expert advice to readers. If you have a personal dilemma, let us know via life@newsweek.com. We can ask experts for advice on relationships, family, friends, money and work and your story could be featured on WSID at Newsweek.

Dennis Poncher, founder of the Because I Love You Parent and Youth Support Groups, a non-profit support organization that helps families in crisis by promoting structure, consequences and consistency.

Dear reader,

The bottom line is that you need to take care of number one—that is yourself. You aren't in the best of physical health and all the stress surrounding family life is also affecting your mental health. You shouldn't feel guilty in any way about not attending your son's destination wedding.

Three years ago, at the time of his wedding, I would have suggested that you respond to him acknowledging your appreciation for his offer of financial help to attend, but emphasizing that the reluctance was less about costs but rather health limitations.

I would have advised to wish your son well and to convey trust in him that the wedding would be a beautiful experience. I would have recommended that you sit tight and not weigh-in further, in the hopes that the situation would blow over.

Unfortunately, it appears that things have become worse since the wedding. Now that you aren't in contact with your son, I'd advise you to try re-establishing contact by sending occasional notes, emails, or texts, telling him and his wife that you miss them and look forward to a time when they fully understand why you were unable to attend the wedding.

Continue to send some correspondence even if you don't receive a response. I also wonder about your daughter's role in the estrangement. Does she have your best interest at heart? Is she telling her brother that he's hurting you, because hopefully that is not part of his plan?

Ask Yourself What Role Did You Play in The Estrangement?

John Sovec, licensed marriage and family therapist at John Sovec Therapy and Counseling.

Dear reader,

Being ostracized by family can be one of the most painful experiences that any person can go through. It feels like a personal betrayal, where you're left hanging with no idea of what the next step toward healing can be.

The uncertainty of a lost family bond doesn't mean that they aren't constantly in your thoughts and that causes a painful cycle of self-recrimination, blame, and shame. When there is rejection, these experiences can become one of the most stressful things to deal with.

With all that hurt in the air, one needs to understand that usually all parties involved in the rift are in pain. For the person who has been cut off, there is a feeling of powerlessness. For the party who instigated the rift, there can be a sense of incomplete business and a nagging question as to whether they made the right decision.

One of the first actions to take in exploring reconciliation is to sit down and take an honest look at your own responsibility in the rift starting. Look at the catalysts for the rift, addressing both current events but also from a historic perspective. Based on past and present actions, ask yourself, what part did I play in this estrangement?

In a perfect world, it might be lovely to receive an apology, but the likelihood of receiving an apology is rarer than one might imagine. Instead, be clear on how all parties involved will behave differently in the future and know that if change happens, it will take time and commitment from everyone.

Finally, it's okay to ask for what you need, but accept that you may not get those needs fulfilled 100 percent in a reconciliation. If you choose to reconnect, treat each other with respect, understand that what you need to heal completely may not be available from the other party. Make decisions from there as to how you want to stay connected moving forward.