

10 Ways to Make a Good First Impression on Your Mate's Parents



By Nic Baird

What's the worst that can happen when you meet your partner's parents? Projectile vomit over dessert. But, really, what are the chances of that? Obviously be yourself, because anything else is too hard for something so stressful. If it makes it easier you can be reserved at first, and let your hair down as you size up the situation. Here are the standard rules to follow when meeting the parents for the first time:

1. Presentation: It could be that your partner's family is a

commune of hippies and they don't care if you wear a ball gown or a burlap sack, but it's not a good idea to go into your first encounter with this assumption. Dress smart, but don't overdress. It has to show that you put effort into your appearance without any flash or sex appeal. Pretend you're dressing for a job interview at the library.

2. Grace: Most parents want to like you, and will try their best to establish good relations for the sake of their child. In some cases you might be prodded or even goaded. If this happens then the only correct response is to remain untouched. Don't fight back, and keep smiling. You will demonstrate your power by your lack of aggression and offence.

3. Enthusiasm: If it feels like a chore, that's reasonable. If the pressure of the date is pure torture, that's not unreasonable. As soon as you ring the doorbell, your gut might urge you to just hide in the bushes and slink away unseen. Resist. You must be ecstatic to have been granted an audience with these most respected figures. Or at least it should seem that way.

4. Confidence: Parents who smell a reasonable amount of fear on your person will not be upset. This could even delight them as a form of respect, or give you an endearing quality. An attempt at a confident presentation is all they ask. If they want you to try the mechanical bull in the basement and you don't have a heart condition, then there's only one choice.

5. Engage: Ask questions and be part of the conversation. Show an interest in topics they bring up, and try to bring new material to the discussion. Look them in the eye, talk at a reasonable volume, and, once again, smile.

6. Restraint: Especially for the first meeting, show restraint in your affection towards your partner. Groping and French kissing will disgust even the most liberal of parents. There's some leeway once you've established your

presence, but the restraint you show in front of them demonstrates the respect they crave, and in most cases, the respect they deserve.

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7. Foresight: Even if you're uncomfortable looking to the future, this is a favourite topic of parents. What are your dreams and aspirations? What skills are you developing? How will you be a valuable addition to my child's life? You're not going to answer these questions outright, but it will be in the subtext when you describe your plans. Talk about yourself. Don't talk about the apartment you hope to inhabit with their progeny.

8. Maturity: These people are older than you. They should be older than you, but if not this applies regardless. Keep your jokes and comments at a level above theirs. This isn't your grandma, but it's somewhere in between her and the school playground. Be mindful not to go too far.

9. Commitment: While it might seem like a good idea to describe yourself as hopelessly in love with your new soul mate, parents don't respond to this as well as you might think. Nobody is good enough for their child until they prove themselves. If this is your first encounter, you should demonstrate that you're serious about the relationship without planning the wedding day.

10. Etiquette: This is a skill that must be developed. It's more than being polite and thoughtful, though those are the essentials. Things to compliment: the house, the meal, the music, and anything of personal significance. Manners involve clearing the plates without offering, and sitting back down when they urge you to stop. You're a guest and you have to pay tribute to their hospitality.

What are some other tips for meeting your partner's parents? Share your ideas below.