

"How to React to My Estranged Daughter at Son's Wedding???"

QUESTION: I have been estranged from my daughter and my lovely grandchildren for the past 2 years. My non-estranged son is getting married next month and I'm terrified of how I'm going to react when I see her, or when she sees me. I don't know whether I'm going to start sobbing or yell at her. It could go either way. And she's very emotional, which is part of our problem, so who knows how she'll respond when she sees me. She's not bringing my grandchildren which in some ways would be easier (and harder) because I know they'd be excited to see me.

My son just wants everyone to get along and for there not to be any scenes, which of course, is reasonable. It's his day after all.

Any advice?

ANSWER: This is a fairly common dilemma for estranged parents. In general, my recommendation is to approach your daughter like nothing has happened and that you're thrilled to see her. This increases the chance of a positive response from her and makes it clear that a) you're not going to make a scene b) you're not going to punish her by acting mad or distant and c) that you're still resilient in the face of the estrangement.

Be aware though, that she may be stiff, refuse your kindness or enthusiasm, and even verbally rebuff you. If that should happen, you should hold your head high and walk away.

On the other hand, if you should have the opportunity to speak to her privately, you could ask her if she's open to talking at some point or working on the relationship.