

Ask Miriam...

Individuals and families in the community are faced with challenging issues and concerns regarding their social, emotional and psychological health. Through the cooperation of **The Jewish World**, Jewish Family Services will offer responses.

Q. Dear Miriam,

I am a single mother who is feeling overwhelmed. I have two young children, ages 7 and 9. I work full time and when I come home, my children want my time and attention. Even though I make sure we have family time, they each need time alone with me.

It becomes difficult to give them what I think they should have.

We don't have any family in the area and because of my schedule and obligations, it is hard to get involved in things outside the home. How can I give my kids what they need and get some breathing time for me as well?

Single Mom

A. Dear Single Mom,

Your struggle is one that is common for both single parents and even two parent families.

However, I realize that you do not have the support of a partner as in two parent families.

Our community needs to look at creative ways to help families like yours. Organized activities in the community cannot necessarily meet the needs you describe.

For a short term solution, I suggest you contact some of the youth groups in the community including the Lindsey Baron Teen Leadership Community Service Program at Jewish Family Services (J.F.S.) to see if there are teens who would be available to spend time with your children individually which could enable you to be with each of them alone.

You may also want to check with the centers and synagogues to see if there are families who want to adopt families.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite families in the community who might be interested in playing a mentoring role for other families to contact the JFS.

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Q. Dear Miriam,

My mother lives in her own apartment and has services to help her with personal care, housekeeping, shopping, etc. It has been wonderful to have this help.

However, she has been telling us about one of her aides who has started to confide in her about her problems. My mother is a very caring person and I think she is getting drawn into this person's life in an inappropriate ways.

I don't know what to do about this since my mom is also getting excellent care.

How should I handle this?

Worried Daughter

A. Dear Worried Daughter,

First, it is good that you are listening to your mother and hearing what she is saying. Too many caregivers assume their older adult is just complaining or imagining things. Also, adult children are concerned that a complaint will either end the service or risk the older adult being punished for saying something. Even if there is good care on a physical level, the stress of the emotional issues can be a risk to the older person's health.

An adult child always needs to oversee the assistance their family member is getting. If you don't get any feedback, you need to ask questions and then listen to the answers. Don't be afraid to raise your concern either with the homecare agency providing the person or directly with the caregiver if he/she is a private hire. Agencies do value their reputation and will work with you. If they don't, change agencies.

When you hire privately, make sure you get the answers to your questions from the references.

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Miriam Adler, A.C.S.W., C.S.W., is assistant director of J.F.S. She answers most frequently asked questions. Please send questions to "Ask Miriam," c/o Jewish Family Services of NENY, 877 Madison Ave., Albany, NY 12208 or e-mail madler@jfsneny.org or call 518-482-8856.