

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 Jewish and my wife is not. While I did not convert to her religion, we agreed to raise the children in her religion.

My wife and I do not want the children to be confused so we don't want them to participate in holiday celebrations with my parents.

I know this is causing a problem for my parents who feel left out, hurt and angry.

Is there a way to resolve this problem?

In the Middle Dad

A. Dear in the Middle Dad,

There is no simple solution to this problem. Unless you intend to keep your children from seeing their grandparents, you will need to help them understand they come from two heritages. They will understand as they grow older that your family has chosen that they be raised in the religion of their mother. You will probably need to explain in time why you have chosen to keep your Jewish identity. So, as you can see, there will be greater confusion.

You and your wife should explore ways to include your parents in family celebrations to foster the wonderful role that grandparents can play. Speak openly with your parents to try and figure out some mutually acceptable ways of dealing with holidays.

This is your opportunity to model respect and consideration for your children.

Don't let the differences be divisive, celebrate them.

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Q. Dear Miriam,

Our son is in his second year of college. I think we are working harder at his staying there than he is. We are afraid that if he leaves school now, he will never go back.

A college education is something that everyone in the family expects.

We are uncertain as to how to proceed. Do we let him leave school or keep the push on for him to finish?

Frustrated Parents

A. Dear Frustrated Parents,

College for college's sake is of little value. Many teens are not ready for college. This is not a tragedy nor is it shameful.

Make an opportunity to discuss with your son about what he sees as his future. He may need experiences to be able to formulate what he wants, or where to head.

Many parents, in their understanding of what it means to be giving and caring, don't allow their children to make mistakes and learn independence. He may need time to appreciate his abilities and develop his interests.

However, if you decide he should leave school, make sure there is a plan that includes a job, self-sufficiency, and a time frame.

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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.