

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,

With Chanukah coming early this year our challenges in the holiday season are a bit more tricky. My husband and I have three young children. I converted to Judaism before my husband and I got married, so my family is not Jewish.

Our families have been accepting of our choices.

However, my parents want to give Christmas presents around the Christmas season. Because of the timing of Chanukah and Christmas in the past few years, we haven't had to deal with the issue. We can't avoid it this year. How can we handle it without insulting my parents?

December Dilemma

A. Dear December Dilemma,

Some of your problem is that you left this issue to work itself out and didn't make your feelings and desires known up front.

You have two traditions in your family, but need to make one tradition in your home. There is nothing wrong with asking that your parents give the children Chanukah presents at Chanukah. You can give your parents Christmas presents. I would suggest that you plan a family celebration sometime in December just to be able to get together.

If you wish, acknowledge the differences while making it clear that your children embrace one tradition in practice.

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Q. Dear Miriam,

I am an older woman, 89, living alone in my own home. My daughter-in-law especially, and son provide a great deal of support and help to me. I don't drive, I have some medical problems, and I live in a more remote area and must rely on them for visits and help.

They want me to give up my home and move into an assisted living community.

I want to stay where I am. However, I know it is difficult for them to be caregivers. What should I do?

Undecided Senior

A. Dear Undecided Senior,

Your situation is not unique, however, each situation is individual. Let me share some thoughts with you about issues you might not have considered. First, your children are probably motivated by many factors. While care giving can be burdensome, they are likely concerned about your well being as well. They may have noticed changes in your ability to handle activities of daily living that you are not aware of. They may also be noticing the effects of isolation on your mental health. Your home may have become worrisome because while you may still be able to climb stairs, you are no longer as safe doing it. This can be because of physical limitations and or changes or because of medications you are taking.

Since you are raising questions and want to understand what is happening, I suggest that you open a discussion with them. You may be surprised to learn about all of the thought they have put into your welfare. You need to also appreciate all of the things that go into your welfare and not confuse quasi independence with true independence. Moving into an assisted living is not necessarily giving up your independence, it could enhance the quality of it.

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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@jfsnyny.org or call 518-482-8856.