

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 have been married for 18 years and have two children ages 15 and 13. My husband has been abusive throughout our marriage. The abuse has been mostly verbal and emotional. He is under great stress at his job, and recently has started pushing me and threatening worse.

I have worked hard to keep my family together, but it is becoming more difficult.

My husband doesn't want to go for any help and says that everything would be okay if I didn't nag him. I don't know what to do; I am feeling as if I don't have any options.

Suffering Wife

A. Dear Suffering Wife,

Your letter gives me the opportunity to say that abuse is much more of a serious problem in the Jewish community than most of us like to believe. Having said that let me respond to you more directly. You are in a difficult situation and after 18 years you may be running out of ways to cope.

You should seek professional help to explore your particular situation and what your options are.

Abusive relationships do not change because one of the parties keeps attempting to adapt to please his/her partner. There are serious core issues that your family is facing.

Get help now.

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Q. Dear Miriam,

My wife and I don't agree about disciplining our children. I believe that she has convinced herself and the children that I am abusive. One of our children recently led a school teacher to believe that I had been abusive.

Child Protective Services was called and we were investigated until they decided that there was no foundation for the accusation.

We are left with tension in our household and no resolution to the disagreement on discipline, which I feel led to the school situation. How do we start to find some peace in our family?

Disturbed Father

A. Dear Disturbed Father,

The process to peace begins with you and your wife privately talking and discussing why you are being perceived in such a manner. In view of the serious situation you found yourselves in, you may want to involve an outside source to help do this.

Once you understand the issues between you, the two of you will need to go together as a team to the children and let them know what the expectations and consequences are for their behavior.

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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 info@jfsneny.org or call 518-482-8856.