

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.

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

Q. Dear Miriam,

Good friends of ours are getting divorced and I am afraid we will get dragged into the middle and have to take sides. I have an opinion about what is going on, and I tend to feel more on the side of the husband.

It is probably impossible to remain friends in the same way we were with this couple, but how do I at least maintain some balance in my relationship with each of them?

Caught in a Divorce

A. Dear Caught in a Divorce,

When a couple you have been friendly with start divorce proceedings, you need to step back and plot a strategy for your future relationships with each of them.

From your letter, I am assuming you have a spouse, so the first step is to discuss this with your spouse and not allow this situation to drive a wedge between the two of you.

You will have your own feelings about who is right or wrong.

You can be supportive to your friend by validating what he/she is going through as being difficult and painful.

However, avoid the trap of joining in on the negative and often vicious attacks made on the other partner.

While responsibility for the necessity of divorce is not always equally apportioned, each of the parties does have a responsibility to conduct him/herself with respect and dignity.

• • • •

Q. Dear Miriam,

I recently lost my husband of 58 years. Of course the pain of losing him is very great now, but I do have a lot of support from family and friends.

My problem is that I have had some negative reactions when some people who heard about my husband's death immediately asked, "How old was he?"

I want to know if I should have felt angry and upset by that question. For me, that question diminished who my husband was as a person.

Recently Bereaved

A. Dear Recently Bereaved,

I would like to offer you my sympathy on the loss of your husband. Your feelings are understandable.

Many of us, including me, have been guilty of exactly what you spoke about. I am sure that none of us stopped to think that that simple question would hurt someone. However, by asking first about one's age, we dismiss what the person who died is all about.

A person's age does not make the death okay or not okay to the one who has lost someone.

While the death of a younger person causes us to take note, it is often because we connect age of death to our own mortality. An older person dying moves the death to a more comfortable place for us.

Thank you for sharing with us.

• • • •

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

ask Miriam-1006-mm...p.1
79p3