

## 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**, Miriam Adler of the Jewish Family Services will offer responses.

As the Pesach holiday is approaching, these two letters address some common issues.

### Q. Dear Miriam,

*Passover is around the corner and I am again concerned about the various family relationships and how those relationships will play out at the seder.*

*Once a year the entire family comes together at the seder.*

*My brother and I have had a difficult relationship for many years, and we do not see each other during the year unless there is a special event.*

*I know I feel our differences and discomfort with each other shouldn't impact the importance of family's getting together.*

*Is there anything I can say or do that would help me not to feel so tense at the seder?*

**Troubled at Passover**

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### Q. Dear Miriam,

*Passover planning is taking place and I am starting to get what I call my seder mentality. We have a large family gathering and, as you might guess, a whole list of predictable behaviors from some of the family members.*

*I know everyone gets upset by some of the things that are said, but in spite of that the statements and behaviors are repeated almost every year.*

*What can I do so that at our seder we can focus on the celebration of Passover instead of maintaining peace at the table?*

**Dreading Passover**

### A. Dear Passover Writers,

Families can be both a source of joy and tension and anxiety. Both of you want to change the status quo. That is the first step to

making a change.

It is also important to realize that by the time everyone is at the seder, it is too late to start enacting your change.

Use the time before the holiday to contact family members who you think share your concerns. Talk it over and together develop a strategy that you know they will support. You need to feel that you have the right to make a change and you should find that others are likely to support you.

Common wisdom tells us that when we have a reaction or feeling about something like the interactions at the seder, we are not alone.

For my writer who is concerned specifically about his relationship with his brother, I would suggest you take a risk and invite your brother out for coffee before the holiday to discuss how the seder should be conducted. I am making the assumption that you are hosting the seder. Let him know you value his input. He will either rise to the occasion to help make it more positive, or you will have to accept the fact he prefers to stay angry, hurt or whatever his behavior is all about. If that's the case, you should free yourself from the responsibility of having to make everything ok.

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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.**

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