

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,

The holiday season is coming upon us quickly.

This year Christmas and the beginning of Chanukah share the day. Our immediate family is an interfaith family and we have grandchildren we share with non-Jewish grandparents. The children are being raised Jewish, but I think this year will be difficult because of the dates of the holidays.

Do you have any suggestions on how to preserve the integrity of the Chanukah celebration?

Anticipating the Holidays

A. Dear Anticipating the Holidays,

Often preparation is a big part of the success of many things.

Since this is already on your mind, share the preparation with your family.

Speak with your children about the holidays and get their input into how to make it work.

If you have a relationship with the other grandparents, talk with them also.

An important goal of this is to help the grandchildren understand what their religious identity is. Their celebration is Chanukah, but they may also be included in Christmas celebrations. Ask family members to respect this and remind them that the children celebrate Chanukah, and gift giving, etc. should recognize Chanukah.

Offer as much hospitality as you can, so you can guide the activities as much as possible.

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Q. Dear Miriam,

A stressful time of the year is approaching and I think many families experience increased tension. My husband and I work additional time during this season, and he gets short-tempered and sometimes borders on being verbally abusive.

Each year seems to be getting more stressful.

Do you have any suggestions about how to handle this?

Seasonally Stressed

A. Dear Seasonally Stressed,

Although it may seem obvious, have you pointed out your observations to your husband? This should be done during a time that you have planned to be together to focus on your relationship, not in the middle of the stressful period. Assuming he recognizes the problem, work together to create a plan for stress reduction and a way to discharge potential explosions.

This is not only his problem. How do you handle his behavior? What messages are you sending him? As part of your plan, make sure you are both clear about what upsets each of you. Be clear about limits and discuss ahead of time the consequences of behaviors. Do not make idle threats in the midst of the stress. Participate with him in some of those things that help to counter stress. Allow him the space to separate himself if necessary. You should also make time to do some self-care.

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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.