

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,

My parents have been married for 55 years and have what I would have described as a great marriage. In the past two years they have been afflicted with health problems.

My dad has Parkinson's and my mother has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. The problem is that my father has become very short-tempered and impatient with my mother. Their whole relationship feels different to me.

I know they still love each other and wonder if there is a way to help them get through this tough time?

Concerned Daughter

the first time in their married lives that they are spending so much time together. The saying, "For better or worse, but not for lunch everyday," speaks volumes.

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

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A. Dear Concerned Daughter,

What you are seeing is not unusual for older couples with health problems. As much as they care about each other, each is trying to handle his/her own illness.

The energy to reach out to the other may be limited. Also, they may be angry at each other and themselves for not being okay.

They may be frightened about the future.

You may be able to help each of them to understand some of their feelings. Maybe you can help provide experiences for them to share that are positive and remind them of their good years together.

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Q. Dear Miriam,

I retired from my job three years ago and have enjoyed being at home and embarking on some projects that I long dreamed about tackling.

This past year my husband retired. He is restless, impatient, depressed, and critical of me.

When he was working, he was oblivious to much of what went on in the house. Now he is asking about everything I do, and wants me to drop everything and go with him at a moment's notice.

What can I do?

This is making me feel angry and uncertain about our future together.

Retired

A. Dear Retired,

As we live longer lives, the years that we are potentially retired have also increased.

Your husband is a good example of someone who didn't expect the great changes involved in retirement.

We plan for so much in our lives, but we assume the change from working to not working will happen automatically.

Many of us don't adapt well to no structure after years of a schedule.

First let him know how unhappy you are.

Then suggest that he think about a volunteer job or a second career. This would involve his revising his mind-set, so be patient.

Counseling might be helpful to make the adjustment from a working person with status to a state of retirement with no clear sense of future.

Finally, you need to renegotiate your relationship to include more couple time with a variety of activities that give both of you pleasure.

For many couples the retirement years are