

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,

Our daughter is an excellent student. She is in junior high school.

We learned, after some prodding, that a girl in her class has pressured her to help her with her schoolwork. This is not just an occasional thing and we know it has been upsetting our daughter.

Our daughter doesn't want to be forced into doing someone else's work, but at the same time can't say no to this girl.

How do we help her resolve this?

Stymied Parents

A. Dear Stymied Parents,

Peer pressure and bullying take many forms. It sounds as if your daughter is being bullied into helping this girl.

Many schools have programs about bullying. See if your school has such a program. If not would they be able to start one?

Meanwhile, try to help your daughter understand what is going on and develop some strategies for dealing with this girl. Find out what your daughter's concerns are if she should refuse to help this girl. If the situation does not improve then you need to intervene directly with her parents and teachers.

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Q. Dear Miriam,

All of the kids have cell phones today. They have been very creative in the ways in which they use them. One of the ways is to text message answers to exams and schoolwork. If you don't participate in this you are out of the group. The pressure is difficult for kids to handle. This is also establishing a precedent for cheating as the kids move on to college.

What can we do about this?

Concerned Parents

A. Dear Concerned Parents,

This is something that you need to handle with the school and other parents.

The school should develop a policy on the use of cell phones and if necessary even check them at the door when students enter the classroom.

Parents should be monitoring their own kids both on the computer and with cell phones.

Sometimes parents don't know what is going on. Make it your business to learn what your kids are doing. I am sure other parents would work with you in developing some limitations on the use of cell phones.

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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.