

# 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,

*I have been married for 15 years to someone I can only describe as a Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He can be kind and considerate, but he can also be controlling and unreasonable.*

*I am realizing how little independence and decision making power I have in our marriage.*

*If I don't listen to him and his way, he can become verbally abusive. He has never physically abused me.*

*I have learned over the years how to keep the peace, but the emotional toll has been high. Also, I feel guilty about how I feel when he is treating me in a considerate way. I am confused about what to do.*

*How do I get some help to figure things out?*

**Confused**

## Q. Dear Miriam,

*My husband and I have been married for 12 years and we have three children all under the age of 10. I am a stay at home mom, something that we both agreed that I would do.*

*It is difficult without my working for us to manage financially and this causes some stress in the household.*

*However, we have reached a point of high tension in our home because my husband comes home ready to find fault. He yells at the kids and at me for things I don't think are legitimate. He berates me if everything isn't the way he likes, or if dinner is not ready.*

*This behavior has been escalating and I am becoming frightened about what he might do.*

*I love my husband, but staying with him is becoming difficult. I don't feel I have many options. I am also embarrassed by what is going on in our home, so I have not talked to my family or friends.*

*What can I do?*

**Alone**

## A. Dear Confused and alone,

You have both written about situations in your homes, which can be identified as abusive. We tend, in the Jewish community, not to want to recognize that Jewish families may contain relationships that are abusive. Consequently, family members experiencing abuse feel isolated and alone.

Abusive behavior runs a continuum from mild to severe. There is a tendency to feel that unless there is physical abuse, it is not abuse. Abuse takes many forms including physical, emotional and financial.

Your first step is to find a person at Jewish Family Services or a rabbi to discuss your situation with.

Knowing that you are able to share your problem may give you a feeling of support.

Depending on your individual circumstances, you may find counseling for you and or your husband an option.

You may need to get assistance and support in developing a plan to leave the home. Women often feel they are unable to leave because of economics. What is crucial is to not wait until you have a crisis because your options are then limited.

Abuse is a problem in the Jewish community and we all have to work to educate the community. Together we must develop a response to help those in trouble.



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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