



Randi Rabin: Woman Confused About Her Sexuality; Cell Phone Ruins First Date

Published on 08.07.2014 3:20 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have been in a relationship with a wonderful man for six years. I also have the best times with my girlfriends; we laugh and have fun, joke around and it's awesome. I am finding out inside myself that I like being touched and hugged by my women friends much more than with my boyfriend. I am so bewildered, and I feel that I am changing into someone else completely.

— *Kim in Santa Barbara*

Dear Kim: Women are naturally emotionally close. Girlfriends tend to be fun, safe and exciting all at the same time. We get to share topics with them that our male friends/lovers may not understand or have the time to discuss with us. That's what brings women closer in certain situations.

Sexuality doesn't have to fit into a nice, neat little box. If you are at a happy place in your life, expressing who you are, that sounds pretty great!

Dear Feelings Doctor: I know things have changed a lot with the dating scene, *but* I was on my first date in three years and the guy I was with had his cell phone with him and was on it the entire night! It felt so awful. Is this how dating is these days?

— *Lost in Los Olivos*

Dear Lost: The only thing that needs to get lost is this guy you had the date with! Unless he was an emergency room doctor and on call, there is no excuse for his rude behavior.

Send him the [video "Look Up."](#) And my dear girl, the only thing that you need to say now is ... Next!

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

How do I know what I think until I see what I say? — E.M. Forester

Randi Rabin: Husband and Daughter Don't Get Along; Dad Throws Kink in Family Vacation Plans

Published on 07.31.2014 3:49 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My husband and I have been married for three years. I have a 12-year-old daughter from my first marriage who lives with us full time. My husband and daughter fight all the time, and our home is filled with tension. Please help us.

— *Pat in Santa Barbara*

Dear Pat: There is always a shift in the family dynamics when there is a big change in life, i.e. moving, marriage. Those are two BIG things to adjust to. By taking the step to marry, the two of you adults have entered into an agreement together of maintaining the best, healthiest surrounding for everyone in your home — including your daughter!

If you haven't already done so, go talk to someone who will help you three with whatever issues have you off balance. Be very specific; this will help get to the bottom of the matter more easily.

It usually takes a few years for everyone to feel their way into a new family situation like this and work out all the kinks, so be patient. Have weekly roundtable family discussions about what works, what doesn't

work, and continue loving each other, being kind, listening and having fun in this new adventure. Remember, everyone involved has a voice.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My husband and I have been saving for our family vacation for four years now. We had it all planned out with our two children, who have been saving their allowance and cutting out pictures of things they want to see on the family trip.

My husband told me last night that he has been invited to go on a fishing trip with his buddies, and it's the trip of a lifetime! The family is not invited, and he thinks that we can wait and go on the family cruise another time!

I am so hurt and really, really mad! What should I do? How can he possibly think this is all right?

— *Mad Mama in Ventura*

Dear Mad Mom: First of all, you need to check your husband's pulse and vital signs. He must have fallen down and hit his head! The next thing would be to explain to him that this is his chance to be a hero with his children — simply by keeping his word. Go on this family trip of a lifetime, share the pictures from your trip with the fishing buddies when you get home, and spend the next 60 years reliving all the fabulous memories.

If he still thinks any part of his decision to going fishing and ditch the family plan, perhaps you could put it to a vote! He may need some time to mourn the big one that got away.

P.S. Children learn by examples, so whenever possible try to set good ones. Keeping your word is a great start!

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

“The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are.” — Joseph Campbell

Randi Rabin: Sons' Aggressive Play Turns Violent; Father of 3 Seeks Help with Drug-Addicted Wife

Published on 07.24.2014 2:44 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have two sons, ages 11 and 9. They are always wrestling and being active boys. Lately, I have had to take my youngest to the emergency room twice in the same month. I know that this may seem normal, but it is so upsetting to me. My husband says that they are just being boys!

— *Help! in Goleta*

Dear Help: Boys will always wrestle and be active. There could be a mutual affray, which happens when children close in age are playing too rough. That doesn't sound like what is happening here.

The problem is when your boys cross over that line of aggressive play to violence. Sit down with your children and be very clear that hurting another person is not OK. I do understand that accidents will happen. The healthy part of playing does not have to include going to the hospital. Have this discussion with your husband, too, so everyone knows exactly what is expected around this issue. Playing with the intent of discovery and fun is normal; playing or wrestling to inflict pain is not appropriate.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have been married for 18 years, and for the last two years my wife has been hanging out with the wrong people. I found out my wife was doing drugs. I had found some cut-up straws in the bathroom, and I figured she was doing something she shouldn't have. I am against drugs.

One day she got caught stealing a credit card. The first time, we talked about it; then she did it again, but this time it was from a grocery store. She spent 90 days in jail.

I wanted to leave her, but I had to be strong for my three boys. She told me she was going to change, but I don't see any changes. My boys have a lot of hurt in them because when she got arrested it was in front of them.

Please help me with this issue. In the back of my mind, something tells me to leave, but I can't because I have my boys to take care of.

— *Dad in Santa Barbara*

Dear Dad: This is a sad thing for you and your boys to witness, and you are right, you need to be strong for them. Your wife seems to have a problem, and if she doesn't get help, this type of lifestyle will bring you and your family down again and again.

You do not have to leave your boys, but you do have a voice in requesting that your wife leave and get help. Being in jail for 90 days hopefully was an eye-opener for her. If not, and she continues her addictive behavior with no positive changes, request that she be the one to leave, and return only when she is healthy and clean, working a program of sobriety.

Your boys are trusting that you will keep them safe. It sounds like that is just what you want to do. Feel free to write me again when you need to. We will keep discussing healthy, positive choices for you and your family. Good luck.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

You cannot spend five minutes in the morning affirming that all is well and spend the rest of the day proving that it is not. — Ernest Holmes

Randi Rabin: Good Customer Service Goes By Wayside; Man Wants Fiancée to Take Etiquette Classes

Published on 07.17.2014 5:11 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am at a loss for words around how to get a smile out of the people who are in the people business! No matter where I went today, there was always a face frowning on the other side of my exchange. My daughter even noticed how rude the girl was at the checkout counter and said something to me when we got in the car.

What is going on with the young people of today? How do I handle a situation like that?

— *Upset in Town in Santa Barbara*

Dear Upset: When we have an exchange of any kind during our day with another person, it is really nice to share a smile or a hello. When we are kind to the ones who seem so mean, the people who are the most challenging to like or be patient with, that's when we become part of the shift from negative to positive in the world. Plus, we never know what kind of a day someone else may be having.

The easiest thing to do when you see someone without a smile, give them yours. It sounds silly, but it's true; it really works.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My fiance took me to dinner the other night and said before we get married he wanted me to take some etiquette classes. Of all the crazy things to request! We have been dating for five years and engaged for two. So what's the big deal?

— *Seeing Red! in Santa Barbara*

Dear Seeing Red: It seems to be a pretty important issue with your fiancé. The one thing that marriage is filled with is compromise. So if you are not willing to meet him somewhere in the middle, red may be all you will be seeing with no white wedding dress in your future!

How awful could it be to brush up on a few things and put your best foot forward? Especially when you know your efforts will make your partner happy!

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

Sitting in judgment is such a waste of time. The view is horrible from there; you can't see a thing!

Randi Rabin: Staying Close in Separate Bedrooms; Moving On with Life After Accident

Published on 07.10.2014 4:15 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My husband and I built the home of our dreams with just what we both wanted: separate bedrooms! We get a good night's sleep and are well rested every morning to go on with our lives. The problem is, we are not as close as we were when he snored and I was sleepless. How can we fix this — be partners instead of roommates?

— *Lonely Sleeper in Ventura*

Dear Lonely: Just as you managed to build your dream house and get what you wanted, you now have to continue to rearrange the other parts of your life, too! Here's my suggestion for putting funds into your emotional/romantic bank account: Have date night, movie night, smoothie night — whatever the two of you like to do that brings you both together. Dress up and go down the hall, knock on your hubby's bedroom door and ask to borrow a cup of sugar. Ha!

You already know how to get what you want — now go do it!

Dear Feelings Doctor: I had a bad accident seven years ago that left me with some visual body damage. Not only am I slower to do things, I am now 40 pounds heavier. At 58 years old, what can I do to feel better about myself? I am single and have no one in my life but doctors.

— *Patty in Santa Barbara*

Dear Patty: You had the strength and willpower to make it through a huge life-threatening challenge; remembering that as you go about your days now will help with everything else.

The next step for you can be whatever you wish for. Begin slowly with your doctors' permission; perhaps join a weekly group for walking, watching movies or a cooking or painting class. Your accident was something that happened seven years ago and was one part of your story. What do you see your life looking like, how do you see your story unfolding in the coming seven years?

Reach for those new visions with pictures, places and things that you have been waiting to do when the time was right — now! With your determination and strong will, anything is possible for you.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

I've seen flowers grow in stony places,
Kind things done by men with scary faces,
The gold cup won by the worst horse at the races...
So I trust, too!
Give people your love. Don't give them your like.

Randi Rabin: Daughter Too Critical of Herself; Woman Fighting Depression

Published on 07.03.2014 2:01 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have a comment for you regarding your [column to the question around negative self-talk](#). My daughter is 15 and has always felt shy and embarrassed about almost everything. I can tell you that she has such high expectations for herself, and it worries me that she is seriously critical of every step she takes. We have never put any demands on her like that, so I don't understand where this comes from.

Is there something we should be doing for her?

— *Lost Mom in Santa Barbara*

Dear Lost Mom: Does she have siblings? Is there an underlying dynamic that may be causing her to be so critical? Fifteen is a rough time for teenagers in so many different ways. It may be difficult for her to talk to you, your husband and other family members about whatever is on her mind.

What she needs is a neutral person to share her feelings with. Find a counselor at her school or a professional where you live and see if she is open to going, knowing that this is just for her, about her and what she needs. The counselor will let you know if anything should be shared that is critical with your daughter. If she just needs a safe place to express her feelings, the professional will tell you that this is her time, her space and it will remain private.

Sometimes that's what our children need — a person removed from the daily "ins and outs" of the family system, someone who will not take sides. Let her know that this is a natural and normal progression for her and that she will get some tools needed for this phase of her emotional and physical growth.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have been working on my depression for 20 years, and every time I think I am getting better, something will knock me down again. How can I make any progress? What can I do on a daily basis to be happy?

— *Carla*

Dear Carla: There are several things you can do to help with depression. The very first step is to make sure that you have the green light from your doctor. Next, do some type of physical exercise every day — walk for at least 15 minutes, and visualize hearing your favorite music or seeing your favorite flowers as you walk. Remember the things in your life that you enjoy and spend time every day doing them when possible.

It takes just a few minutes a day to develop new habits that can help with your happiness. Bring those things into your life and see how that can lift your spirits. You have been working on your happiness you say now for 20 years, way to go! See what you are capable of accomplishing? Keep up the good work. Got a question for *The Feelings Doctor*? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

“I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy.” — Rabindranath Tagore

[Randi Rabin: Succeeding as a Stepmom; Responding to Comments After Mastectomy](#)

Published on 06.26.2014 5:40 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am happily married to a wonderful man for three years now. I am also a stepmother to his two great kids who I love dearly. My question is: How do I guide these children, love them and do the best I can when their mother constantly tells them that I am the one who broke up their marriage? She is always saying awful things to them about me. Help!

— *Cynthia in Santa Barbara*

Dear Cynthia: This is your time to shine — with your stepchildren and with their mother. Behavior you do not want to see repeated should be ignored.

The attitudes and words you want to see repeated should be praised and acknowledged. There is a wonderful video and class parents with children of divorce are mandated to attend called “Children in the Middle.” Perhaps everyone should take a refresher course together.

You can also find out their favorite foods that their mother makes, ask her for her recipes, share some things that you both have in common and maybe, just maybe, one day there will be peace on both sides of the fence. It’s a goal worth working toward.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have recently had a double mastectomy. My girlfriends around me think that I need to have reconstructive surgery to look better and feel better. I feel fine, and I think I look fine, too. What do I say to their comments?

— *Keeping a Breast in Santa Barbara*

Dear K.B.: Tell them you feel fine, and if they need any help with how they feel about their bodies, perhaps you have suggestions for them as well! Bless you and your courage to keep shining.

Got a question for *The Feelings Doctor*? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

You cannot fix what you won’t talk about. Courage is the most important virtue! There is no blame ... there just is.

[Randi Rabin: Husband Afraid of Sex During Pregnancy; Son Learning Dad’s Negative Self-Talk](#)

Published on 06.19.2014 1:10 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am three months pregnant and my husband will not touch me. We used to have tons of sex, and now he is afraid to do anything. I am more aroused now than ever! What is going on, and how can we continue to have a fun, hot marriage?

— *Gayle in Santa Barbara*

Dear Gayle: Your changing hormones and sex drive are just the first part of everything in your life becoming wonderfully unpredictable! Your husband may be a bit uneasy thinking that the baby could be hurt in some way while having sex. This is a normal reaction with a first-time pregnancy. The fetus is securely protected (the cervix and amniotic sac will protect your baby). If he needs more reassurance, have him speak directly to your ob/gyn. Parenthood is a magical journey into the unknown with all the hormones dashing through your body, from your breasts to the rest of you. This is a time when the increased blood flow heightens every part of you. Embrace each moment of this beautiful dance. Stay connected with your husband, and share what is going on with him as you continue to change — inside and out. This time is for you and your man to sink even deeper into the love and caring that you have for each other. This commitment will be the fuel that nurtures and protects your new baby, now and always.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am in need of some advice for my family. My husband is hardworking and kind — and has a temper! It is the strangest thing. He only has negative things to say about himself. If he doesn't do something just perfect, he begins yelling at himself and says, "You are such an idiot! How could you be so stupid?!"

It has always bugged me some, but I never really thought about it much until yesterday when my 6-year-old son was playing with his blocks and called himself stupid for attempting to put the round cube in the square hole. It made me cry. Advice for my family, please.

— *Patty in Goleta*

Dear Patty: Negative self-talk is one thing that you need never pass down to your son. If this has been your husband's behavior since the two of you met, suggesting that he get some tools to manage this behavior is right on target.

Learning how to be kind to ourselves just as we would our close friends and people we care about is something we all deserve. Having failures and making mistakes is a part of living life and being human.

Keeping score with perfection just leads to higher stress levels and in some cases depression.

Perhaps make an appointment with a counselor for the two of you so you both can brush up on things that need your attention — behaviors you are absolutely sure you do not want your son to emulate.

There is a difference between, "You are a bad boy!" and saying, "Your 'behavior' was questionable today." It's a subtle difference, but oh so powerful in the self-esteem category.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

"The pain is already done. The crying is the healing ..." — John Harris

[Randi Rabin: Talking to Kids About Losing Family Home; Girlfriend Gives Ultimatum on Marriage](#)

Published on 06.12.2014 5:36 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My husband and I lost our home that we've owned for 18 years because the economy is so bad right now. We have three children; two of them are teens. My question to you is what should be shared with our kids? How much of the fear that I am feeling do they need to know about? Thank you.

— *Karin in Ventura*

Dear Karin: Your children are already aware that something is going on. Emotions carry so much more weight than words. The way you have described your feelings here, it sounds like a family discussion is needed so you and your husband can reassure the children that although changes are in the near future, your family will still remain in tact, and as a family, everyone will have different feelings about what is going on.

Whether it is going to a new school and making new friends, or moving out of the home that they have known since they were small, this is when the family comes together and makes a plan — talking with your kids through the entire process.

Moving surely does bring about challenges and changes, and with that can also be a time when your family can rally around each other with support and new ideas on how to make it an adventure (of sorts), too! You and your husband will need to discuss the level of disclosure you feel is necessary to share with everyone.

Also, watch for major changes in their behavior immediately after the move, such as moodiness and depression. I bet your children will surprise you with their determination and teamwork on how to handle certain things, too — like who gets the biggest bedroom in the new house! Good luck.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My boyfriend and I have been living together for six years now, and we talk about getting married some day and having kids. I am 35 and he is 42 years old. He isn't in any hurry and lately gets upset when I pressure him. I gave him an ultimatum, and he doesn't care. What should I do now? I feel we are running out of time.

— *Peg in Santa Ynez*

Dear Peg: Ultimatums are a sure way to get things to shift — no guarantee in what direction, though. If you have exhausted every conversation with your boyfriend, perhaps you two should revisit the issue of children. If you both are on the same page about having a family, then go talk with a professional about what issues are holding things up.

If he is dragging his feet for other reasons, like not sure about children or his job, station in life or being committed to you, it's time to find out exactly where you both stand, then move in the direction that feels right for you as a couple or as two people looking for different things in life. Asking for what you want in your life is the right thing to do — for both of you.

Got a question for *The Feelings Doctor*? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

Kissing activates the trust hormone in all of us. Here's to kisses, kisses and more kisses. Pucker up, baby!

Randi Rabin: 'Sweet' 5-Year-Old Develops a Temper; 40-Something Ponders Return to School

Published on 06.05.2014 6:43 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am writing to you because my daughter is the light of my life. She is very sweet, and our family revolves around her wants and needs. The problem is that lately she has a very bad temper. I don't know where this is coming from, and need your advice. Tiff is 5 years old. Thank you.

— *Fran in Ventura*

Dear Fran: Your 5-year-old daughter should be the light of your life, and at the same time, everyone in the family should hold important positions, too — not just her!

Your sweet “Tiff” needs boundaries and rhythm in her daily life. She will not get that if you bend to her every whim. Set rules and guidelines, dos and don'ts with her, and see her blossom in a healthy direction.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am in my late 40s and really would like to go back to school to finish my degree. I don't feel like it is possible and that I may be too old. Your thoughts on this, please.

— *Too Old in Santa Barbara*

Dear Too Old: I have a question for you. How old will you be if you don't go back to school? And what if you went forward to school? Sometimes we get caught up in how things look instead of how they feel to us. So, if you feel this is something you want to do, then it is possible. You decide — and then get to it, girl!

Got a question for *The Feelings Doctor*? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

If we anticipate happiness, it will be there when we arrive. Write your own script of happiness today, and then again tomorrow. You can always plan for the future. Happiness likes to come along.

Randi Rabin: Letting Go of Dark Thoughts; Birthday 'Boy' Wants Friend to Split the Bill

Published on 05.29.2014 3:33 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have been trying so hard to focus on letting go of the dark things and the sad things in my life. Every day I tell myself that today the negative things will not get to me and that I do not want any of this heavy sadness that I am carrying around anymore. Nothing is changing. Things are not better, and nothing is helping; the negative keeps finding me.

— *Dark Days in Santa Barbara*

Dear Dark Days: When we put all of our attention on what we do not want in our lives, we continue getting more of it. You can change that by shifting your focus on the new place you desire to go — the things you desire to have!

By turning your thoughts and attention on what it is you do want instead of what you don't want, your life will take on a whole new dimension of possibilities. When we focus on what we want to leave behind, we are still carrying all of that with us.

Walk outside when you are done reading this and look up at the wonderful, beautiful blue sky. The world is yours today to create peace, fun and excitement — so get to it! This will instantly fill your heart with joy and hope. Do that daily — oh, let's say, how about forever?

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have a friend who has been in my life since grammar school. It's been over 40 years! The problem is, certain habits he has are extremely annoying. This last one I feel I need to address. He is throwing an extravagant birthday party for his 50th. He mentioned the date to me, and I said yes I'll be there. Three months later, he informs me it will cost \$750 for each person as he totaled the cost and divided it by the number of guests! What kind of man does this type of thing their entire *adult* life? I could tolerate it in our youth, but quite frankly I'm fed up with it! What do I say to this lifelong friend?

— *Lifelong Friend in Santa Barbara*

Dear Lifelong Friend: You say this friend has been in your life for 40 years. That's a long time to know one another, and also to adapt and accept or not accept each other's behavior. If you feel this last maneuver he attempted needs to be addressed, absolutely bring it to his attention.

Certain things we overlook in our younger years are no longer tolerable as we mature. It sounds like this is one of your growing moments. If your lifelong friend wants to throw himself a birthday bash, good for him; he is responsible for footing the bill or perhaps charging a cover at the door. That said, a party usually costs somewhere in the neighborhood of \$50 per person at the most. So, \$750 per person — come on!

Reeeaaaaalllly!

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

Patience is an act of confidence ... knowing that life is unfolding as it should. Patience is not laziness or indifference ... it is trusting in life and adding a dash of hope in the mix. Patience is a silent energy ... a calm positive look into the future. As I joyfully focus on sharing kindness and love, my life is filled with pray and I am patient. I am patient and present to witness the masterpiece that is revealed before my eyes today.

Randi Rabin: Woman Questions Partner's Friendship with Ex; Friend Feels Taken Advantage Of

Published on 05.22.2014 3:09 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: How do you feel about people in committed relationships maintaining friendships with their exes? I have been living with my partner for three years. He still checks in with his ex-girlfriend every couple of weeks and sometimes drops over to her house for a visit.

I knew he was close to her when we first met, and I said maybe we can be friends, but they have chosen to keep their friendship separate. In fact, not only separate but a secret. And that's what bothers me.

— *Susan in Santa Barbara*

Dear Susan: It sounds like your partner is not only committed to you but to his ex-girlfriend as well! The huge, red flag here is that you say he is attempting to keep his relationship with her a secret. This is not the way a healthy relationship stays healthy. Maintaining a civil relationship with an ex is a nice idea when it works for everyone involved. Carrying on in a secretive way is unacceptable!

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have a dear friend who always — and I do mean always — takes advantage of my good nature. Whether it is about me driving to dinner or me paying for our fun trips we take, she never offers to pay for anything. We are both grown-ups and should not have this issue come up. Thanks.

— *Taken Advantage in Goleta*

Dear Taken: I am going to jump out on a limb here and ask how often this issue comes up in your life. If you as an adult are not setting your boundaries and showing people how you prefer to be treated, they will

probably continue to behave selfishly, and this person really knows how to take advantage of your kindness.

It's time for you to put your grown-up hat on and tell your friend exactly what's up. Hopefully she will acknowledge your concern and start meeting you halfway. If not, is that the kind of friend you are truly seeking?

Got a question for *The Feelings Doctor*? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

"I shall take this harp of my life, I shall tune it to the notes of forever ..." — Tagore

Randi Rabin: Dad Is Tired of Being the 'Bad Guy'; Woman Is Jealous of Best Friend

Published on 05.15.2014 3:10 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am always made out to be the bad guy for having my children do as they are told and follow the rules at our house. My wife never follows through with any limits or rules we set for them. Help!

— *The Bad Guy in Santa Barbara*

Dear Bad Guy: There is no I in team. That's a tricky situation when the parents have different strategies on how to raise the children, and it goes on in every family.

First of all, kids thrive on rhythm. The word rhythm means regular rise and fall. Having a set of rules and boundaries that come from both parents will help them feel a sense of safety and comfort. Unity is of the utmost importance with you and your wife.

Put this on your list of things to do: Check in with each other on your "universal goals" as parents and standing strong as **one** solid team! This will help the entire family, and your children will know that they cannot use mom against dad any longer. The two of you will become that solid, loving, steady force in the family that is needed.

It is also an important lesson to teach your children to always try to keep your word and finish what you start.

Peace and happiness all around.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have a big nagging problem! My best girlfriend is so pretty. I am 30 pounds heavier than her *and* 10 years younger. My husband talks about her all the time, flirts with her and they have more fun than anyone else in the room. I feel like a fat cow!

I am embarrassed about my body, and my friendship with her is on the outs. It's awful, and my husband doesn't see anything wrong. What to do now?

— *Jealous in Los Angeles*

Dear Jealous: Comparing ourselves to others is never a winning proposition. We all have hands and feet that look similar, but under a microscope, there is an individual stamp that makes each one of us unique, different and very necessary. Find that piece of yourself in your reflection, not in anyone else's.

Begin to live your life on your terms, love who you are right now and things will shift in a natural way.

You will begin noticing things about yourself that have been there all along, and your shine will return — no holding back any longer. Be you, your authentic self, dear girl. Everyone else is already taken.

Got a question for *The Feelings Doctor*? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

"I will not let anyone walk through my mind with their dirty feet." — Gandhi

Randi Rabin: Married Man Rekindles with Old Flame; Husband Tired of Wife's Nitpicking

Published on 05.08.2014 6:39 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have been married for 11 years to my wife, but I have an issue. I saw my first love about one year ago, and we have been talking on the phone and by email. I am starting to have feelings

for her, and I know she feels the same way about me. I have cheated one time with her, and my feelings are getting stronger every day. What should I do?

— *Friend in Santa Barbara*

Dear Friend: She is your ex for a reason, and perhaps you need to remind yourself “why” you broke up in the first place. Second, people usually think that the grass is greener on the other side of the street. Well, my friend, grass is just green — period.

Ask yourself how you would feel if your wife was doing the same thing that you are behind your back. Take those feelings of arousal that your ex is stirring up and bring them back home to your wife. Share that excitement with her and see what happens next. Perhaps new flames will begin to burn, and after 11 years, adding more sauce to the pot is a very good idea.

Everyone deserves the truth in their lives — especially you. Whatever your truth is, share it with those around you. Perhaps that will help you make a decision. Secrets keep everyone in the dark — where it is a challenge to really grow. Truth is what brings the light in, so everyone can see where they are going.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have been married for 17 years, and my wife is a great person. The problem I have is that she nitpicks about everything. My boys and I are tired.

How do we tell her to stop in a nice way without her getting upset, or do we just tell her the way we feel? I’m at the point that I am ready to explode, and I don’t want to do that. It is getting bad, but I think she is just trying too hard to be a good mom and wife.

— *Good Dad in Santa Barbara*

Dear Good Dad: Sounds like a really good time for a “family meeting.” She may get upset about what you have to say; nevertheless, it is time for everything to be put out on the table. Your wife needs to hear these exact words from you and perhaps from your boys.

One of the things that families forget to do is just tell it like it is — kindly, of course. Everyone involved has his or her way of doing things that will never be exactly like anyone else! Let her hear your feelings about what is going on. She may be so busy running the household that she may think it is part of her duty as a mom to be the ringmaster. Parents often need to be reminded to *catch your children being good*. It’s amazing to see firsthand what a few kind words can do for the spirit.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

He said, “There are only two days in the year that nothing can be done. One is called yesterday and the other is called tomorrow, so today is the right day to love, believe, do and mostly live.” — [Dalai Lama](#)

[Randi Rabin: Handling Unwanted Advice from In-Laws, and a Wife Who Won’t Stop Complaining](#)

Published on 05.01.2014 5:45 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have three children, two teenagers and one who is in the sixth grade. My in-laws are always trying to help by giving me their “great advice.” My husband is a kind man with no harsh words for anyone, and I feel like a jerk for wanting them to just shush up! How do I get this nagging feeling off of my back?

— *Cynthia in Santa Barbara*

Dear Cynthia: Family is such a wonderful nonrenewable resource, and yes, they all can be a bit trying. The next time your in-laws feel the need to share their deep insight and wisdom, just smile and say, “Thank you so much for sharing.” Then go about doing it the way that feels right for you.

I’m sure they mean well enough, but by the time we are mothers ourselves we have our own ideas about how our home and family should be cared for. There is always room for positive, extra input (perhaps in small doses and once in a blue moon).

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am happily married for 12 years now, and I have one thing that I really need help with. My wife is wonderful in so many ways. One that she is not: complaining!

She walks through the day noticing everything that makes her angry. I leave the house in the morning as fast as I can because by nature I am a happy guy. She will call me throughout the day and rant about one thing or another. Never is it uplifting and positive.

— *Help! in Los Angeles*

Dear Help: The love you have for your wife will never be enough to encourage her to be happy if she is constantly coming from a place of lack. It really has nothing to do with you, anything or anyone else. Her glass is just half-empty.

Spending your days holding on to a prosperous, happy attitude is the best way to go through life. Do not let anyone steal your joy, and ask your wife to join you on a weeklong crusade to stamp out whining. And then let her know that you are more than happy to share your joy with her until she finds her own. Now that's true love.

Got a question for *The Feelings Doctor*? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

I've noticed lately that in our small community there has been a resurgence of kindness and caring — a genuine neighborly concern for each other as we all go about our days and our lives. While the world continues to spin and turn, it warmed my heart as I witnessed a young man holding the car door open for an elderly woman while helping her with her groceries. Taking the time to help those right in front of us is how that ripple of kindness and caring will spread. Have a blessed day.

Randi Rabin: Grown Daughter Mad at Mean Mom; Woman Hurt by Gossip About Outfits

Published on 04.24.2014 8:03 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My mother is really mean to me. She has been since I was a child. I am 39 years old now, and she still continues to embarrass me when she has the opportunity. I am well educated and the only one in my family with a college degree, but still I am kicked in the knees whenever I am around her. I am so mad.

How can I change her and the way she treats me?

— *Just Plain Mad in Santa Barbara*

Dear Mad: The scenario you describe here can leave one with a heavy heart, but here's the good news ... You are doing the work right now that your mother did not. Sometimes when people don't know how to show affection or love and have been mad for so long, "mad" is the only way they know how to operate in the world. Generally under that mad there is a deep sadness that has been there all along. It's a learned behavior that is so deep that it will take awhile to peel away all the layers.

If you are ready today, right now, you will need to let go of your mother being anything other than who she is and who she has always been. The anger you feel today is a natural response to what has been happening throughout your life, and you do not need that dynamic any longer.

Today you are searching for something else. Bless your mother for being and doing what she was capable of, and if possible, tell her just that. Also let her know that you are no longer available for mean, hurtful behavior from her. We teach people how to treat us, and this is your time to be the kind, loving, caring person you need to be in your own life. To try and attempt to change more than one person is a futile endeavor, my friend. The one and only person you do have the power to change is you! It's a fantastic journey, and you will be great at it.

Good luck, and thank you for sharing your story with me. Keep in touch.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I live in a small community and have a very busy life driving my children to school — each go in different directions! I dash to a workout class just in time for "me" and continue my day in workout clothes.

I heard some ladies talking the other day about how offensive it is to wear sweaty clothing all day long and pick your children up looking like that. I feel so hurt. I do not have time in my busy day to worry about my outfits! I am making dinner and focused on the connections my family and I have.

P.S. I am not making very many friends. Help!

— *Hurt*

Dear Hurt: What others think about you is none of your business. It's what you think of yourself that really matters. Would you honestly want to be friends with women who judge you by your outfits everyday? Sounds like an episode of *Mean Girls* to me.

Like you said, you are too busy taking care of things and people who really matter. Be true to yourself and your ethics. Your path will cross with someone who really will be a friend and actually knows how. Being

a good mother and partner is so much more in style than a new pair of Jimmy Choos or a toxic gossip group any day.

You say you don't have time to worry about your outfits. You really do not have time to worry about women who spend their days wading in the shallow end of human kindness either. When those women approach you; run as fast as you can in the opposite direction.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

When a thing can no longer offend you, it ceases to exist in the old way. The root of upset is like and dislike. Try to talk your mind out of anything and you will be there all day long! Instead, take a different stance. Begin just watching — only that, just watching. Not taking part in anything else.

When the words "I don't want that to happen!" come out of your mouth, counter it with, "I'll be fine with that! Oh, I hope that happens, it would be such good growth. I will be fine with that."

[Randi Rabin: Man Wants to Tell Fiancee He Takes Viagra; Teen Is Worried About Depressed Friend](#)

Published on 04.17.2014 6:03 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My fiancee and I have been together for almost five years now, and during this entire time, I have been taking Viagra when we have sex. I don't know that I want her to find out, but I can't keep taking this stuff! It's bad for my heart as I am 62 years old with high blood pressure. She is 14 years younger than I am, and I'm afraid she will leave when she finds out the truth.

— *Helpless in L.A.*

Dear Helpless: Love and connection are really important to all of us, and honesty ranks right up there, too! I'm not sure that your love life is worth the price of your life, though. If your relationship with this woman is based on secrets, where do you go from here?

Tell the truth. Maybe without the stress of "hiding stuff" you can get things up and going again.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have a friend who tells me that she is thinking about hurting herself. We are both seniors in high school, and she has been depressed and sad for months now. Please give me some advice.

— *Scared in School*

Dear Scared: Have your friend go talk to someone immediately. Go with her if she will let you — just make sure that she goes.

It is really important to tell her parents, too. They may already know that her attitude has changed, and she may seem "just sad" right now.

It is not worth taking a chance around this issue at all. Please let the grownups in her life know what is going right now. Talking to your friend is a good thing, too, and in addition to you, she needs professional help. Go to the school counselor tomorrow and share this with him or her. It is confidential and very necessary.

Keep in touch with me and let me know how I can assist further.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

When we question whether to give someone in need a hand or a word of encouragement, the answer is yes. Pure and simple. Just yes. I know we all are busy with our things and lives and families, so when you run into someone without all of that, lend them one of your hands. A hand of hope ...

"There are no traffic jams on the extra mile." — Zig Ziglar

[Randi Rabin: Wife Yearns for Romance; Teen Still Waiting to Have Sex](#)

Published on 04.10.2014 2:30 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My husband and I have different schedules with our lives and our emotions. During the day he barely has time to say hello or eat lunch, and when he comes home, he doesn't kiss or hug me. BUT, he is always ready for sex.

After working at his office until 7:30 every night and not thinking about anything else but business, he comes home and is instantly "in the mood." I am not! Whatever happened to romance? Please give me some advice.

— *Charlotte in Los Angeles*

Dear Charlotte: After couples have been together for more than a year or so, patterns and schedules will often dictate their lives. That's not to say that having a safe, loving, secure home life is boring by any means.

If you want to G.E.T. you need to A.S.K. So, let your husband know how much you miss those spontaneous, romantic times. Schedule date night once a week — really! You take the lead a few times and surprise him with plans already made. As far as the romance part, show him exactly what you mean — he'll get the message. Men are really good with a little direction.

It's very important for couples to have this time just for them. Having a new, fresh outlook on your connection and taking the time to honor your relationship and the sacredness that brought you together will spark the romantic love angels, too. The bond that makes your life work will always need some T.L.C. Above all, have fun.

Dear Feelings Doctor: [I wrote you a question back in January](#), and I really like what you said about not having sex so soon. Well, I waited to have sex with my boyfriend and we are still together. My best friend didn't wait, had sex with her boyfriend and now he won't even talk to her! It's creepy and hurtful for this to happen when you care about someone so much.

What do I do now with these feelings I still have about going ahead and doing it? My boyfriend doesn't want to wait any more. Thank you again for helping me.

— *Stephanie in Santa Barbara*

Dear Stephanie: I am so glad to hear that you did what you felt was right for you. At 14, there will be many things that you find challenging. Starting to experiment with your sexual emotions is right at the top of this list. Becoming sexually active before you are mature enough to protect yourself, you are at risk for more things other than the experience that seems so urgent: sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy and perhaps the feeling of, "Oh, man, why did I rush this?"

Being in a relationship in your teens can be tricky, so find the things that you have in common besides sex. Each day that you say yes to your feelings and no to what others want you to do will build your character and self-respect.

Remember, there is only one time that makes it the first time. Be really, really sure when that time should be. If you find that you cannot say no to sex, say yes to safe sex. Keep writing to me and I will always answer.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

Today is the day of No Complaining. It's the 24-hour gratitude walk. Every time you feel like complaining or getting angry, stop and count to 10 with deep breaths. Turn things around in those 60 seconds and make that moment a positive one. You have just created permanent change. Congratulations.

[Randi Rabin: Husband Finds Wife's Hidden Love Letters; Woman Questions Friends' Relation](#)

Published on 04.03.2014 2:51 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I recently found some love/romantic letters hidden in a box in my wife's closet. We have been married for 18 years, and these letters are dated three years ago. How do I approach her? I am walking around not knowing what or who or anything right now.

— *Hurt in Santa Barbara*

Dear Hurt: I would like to be able to tell you that I am sorry for the pain you are feeling right now, but the truth is, even when there is a break in trust or fidelity or any number of ruptures that happen in a relationship, it offers us a time to really grow.

Get curious with your wife about why she is doing what she is doing, talk about whatever bond she has with this other person. Ask her, and then sit and really, really listen. Become a safe person for her to confide in.

The sense of criticism and judgment is what makes our partners seek other avenues to express their passions — sexual and otherwise. Couples who have the capacity to repair a relationship often get to the healing part of their love, too. We are born to love, and we are also in need of conflict so our relationships can grow and deepen. That can only happen it seems when we are challenged right to the edge!

Do you love your wife? Does she love you? If you both want to work on your marriage, roll up your sleeves and get to it.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My husband and I have a lot of wonderful friends. This one couple we have dinners with and go to concerts with have a very strange dynamic. She always brow beats him — constantly saying he is not this, too much of that, how come he can't be more like this person!

She is not nice to him, and then will turn and smile at us as if she has just reprimanded a naughty puppy. I really want to say something to her, but what and how?

— *Strained in Santa Barbara*

Dear Strained: You have painted a scenario that doesn't work for you. Well, then give thanks and celebrate your own life. Every couple have their inner workings and dynamic that fit for them. If they seem cozy and happy with their day to day life, even though it feels off to you, who's to say they need to change it?!

If their relationship doesn't work for you, thank your lucky stars you have one that does! Maybe they go home at night and are so thankful they have their stuff instead of yours.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ... "Our Daily Thread"

Kneel down and surrender. Train your family to love others. Love can conquer the hardest heart. To the guardian of your marriage: "I still do." Slow down, evaluate your life and your schedule. Man up, step up. Now is a good time to be the best that you can be.

Randi Rabin: Woman Tired of Friends Gossiping; Neighbor Wants to Help Single Mom

Published on 03.27.2014 1:27 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: Please give me your sage advice with my dear women friends. We are so close and have shared years of experiences with each other and our families. Lately all they do at our lunches — all five of them — is GOSSIP!

Please tell me what to say. I don't want to be around it anymore. Help me stop the madness!

— *Enough Is Enough in Montecito*

Dear Enough: Let's face it. Gossip may seem fun at the time — you giggle through someone else's bad haircut or silly mistake they have made — and then, the merry-go-round comes right back to you. Gossip is a swift ride to a dead-end road! To put it gently, "Why seek your friends with time to kill? Seek them with a passion for living and a joy for loving!"

Explain to them your feelings about the type of hurtful discussions that have been filling your lunches lately. Perhaps pointing out to them the shift in pleasant conversation that has given rise to a negative vibe will help everyone get back to what gatherings are really for — making memories that help us feel better about who we are and what we are doing in this world. Not causing harm requires staying awake.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have a neighbor who is struggling and raising three children on her own. I would like to give her some things that I know she could use, but I don't want to step out of line in any way. How shall I go about giving to her? She is a very respectable woman, and our casual relationship is a nice one. Thank you.

— *Stacy in Santa Barbara*

Dear Stacy: Your sentiments toward your neighbor are very nice to hear. What would be a casual approach to open this discussion would go something like this: "I have been doing some spring cleaning and have several things that I need to let go of and make room for others. If there is anyone you know who could use them, please let me know."

This is just a nice, unassuming way of opening that door, just in case she feels like saying yes or no, it's up to her. I'm wondering how old her children are? Perhaps your lawn needs mowing!
Your kindness is a welcome treat ... blessings.
Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

If I lose my way while traveling, I stop to get my bearings. Likewise, on my journey through life, when I stumble or feel uncertain, I pause to re-center myself. I do not allow fear or anxiety to take over my thoughts. Holding faith and hope as my travel companions, I journey on ...

Randi Rabin: Husband Is Always Criticizing His Wife; Woman's Partner Remains Friends with Ex

Published on 03.20.2014 4:34 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I love my husband — really. It's just that he always puts me down, and I have learned to think of myself lately like he does. Not good enough! It is driving a huge space between us. How do I fix this? It's hurting me.

— *Sheila in Santa Barbara*

Dear Sheila: I hear what you are saying, and your husband needs to hear this, too! Tell him exactly what you have expressed here in this wonderful, gentle way.

Then perhaps it's time you took something like karate or a self-defense class — not to use as a means to communicate with your husband, but for *you*, just you. Feel what it is like in your body to be strong, say yes to the things you wish, and no to the things you do not want around you. Just being self-assured will help you make that subtle, inner change for yourself.

Relationships can take on a life of their own, and before you realize what's happening, things have shifted and the boat doesn't steer straight anymore. It doesn't sound like a serious all-or-nothing situation, but it is time to have that talk you have been thinking about for a while now.

Make some private time for the two of you to discuss this important issue and put things out on the table. Give him a chance to see the new, improved you so things can go forward to a better, more positive place. You will feel like a huge weight has been lifted — indeed it has!

Dear Feelings Doctor: My partner would like to remain friends with his ex. I didn't have a problem with this at first; in fact, I said I'd like to be friends, too. His ex declined that idea and instead randomly calls him to do small favors for her when needed. The other night she called and asked him to put her garbage bins out as she was going away for the week, and would he like to come over in the morning and get her perishables. He said sure, be over at 8 a.m.!

I resented this — not the garbage bins, although I did wonder why she didn't have a neighbor friend to ask — but his snap-to response about getting over there to retrieve her leftovers. It didn't feel right. It felt manipulative and sort of degrading.

Needless to say, I voiced my concerns and we had a fight about it. We worked through it, but afterward I wondered if I was being petty. Your thoughts?

— *Nancy in Santa Barbara*

Dear Nancy: Ex lovers are sort of like back taxes — once the year has passed, you close the file and move on with the new year's business. Remaining friends with an ex can be a possibility, but when the invitation for the “three” of you was turned down it feels like there is some sort of hidden agenda on her part.

Guys sometimes are oblivious to this type of thing and just want to be needed — sometimes. Other times, there is a subtle ex-lover syndrome lurking around the corner. If the ex has no desire to be friends with both of you, that should be the end of it. There should be no reason for further discussion. If your man doesn't stand up for his current relationship, let him know that he is free to go have leftovers with her — permanently.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

Make room for grace. It stands right next to you. Take time each morning and again at night to practice and maintain an open, grateful heart.

Randi Rabin: Friend Worked Up About Airport Drop-off; Dad in Power Struggle with Teen Son

Published on 03.13.2014 6:30 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have a question that has been really bugging me for months! I saw my close girlfriend's husband dropping another woman off at the airport here in Santa Barbara — and you know what a small town this is! Nothing goes unnoticed with women. We all have too much time on our hands and love a good story. What should I do with my juicy information?

— *Ready to Tell! in Santa Barbara*

Dear Ready: What should you do with your juicy information? Not sure about that. Perhaps what you saw was a work-related drop-off or a brother/sister interaction. You don't mention anything about hugging, groping or the stuff that might make it "juicy."

Maybe this information is bothering you more than it does the couple involved. Find a good therapist (with so much time on your hands, I'm certain you can locate one) and discuss this troublesome issue you are carrying around.

With all this time on your hands, as you say, sit down and watch an episode of [Keeping Up with the Kardashians](#) for your daily dose of nonsense! Or volunteer with [SEE International](#); they need people like you who notice everything! You may have just stumbled on a new career. Go get 'em.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My son and I have this ongoing negative dynamic for the past few months, maybe six months to be exact, and I would sure like to change it somehow.

I feel bugged about so many of his habits lately: his chores, his attitude with his mother and me, and his irresponsible attitude. He's 14, and I can't seem to get through to him at all. I feel like I am always harping at him about what he doesn't do and not seeing the things that he completes every day.

My wife and I are constantly discussing this issue, and she noticed how the heaviness is getting heavier between my son and me. Help, please.

— *Lost in S.B.*

Dear Lost: Catch your son being good! And then pinch yourself and repeat, "He's only 14, he's only 14, he's only 14!"

That's where you can begin. You surely don't want just negative glue holding you together as father and son, so lighten up a bit.

I totally understand your frustration with the chores around the house and things that you would like for him to do. Here's what I was thinking might work with you two: Build an alliance with him.

Something like: "I know you have homework and a lot of after-school activities that keep you really busy all week, and I notice that your chores still don't get done sometimes. How can I help you achieve the same goals at home that you do at school and with your other commitments?" "I know that your allowance is important to you because it gives you freedom to get and do the things you like and want, so let's talk about how we can both get what we need around this issue, OK?" "It's not fun for me to have to remind you all the time, so let's put our heads together and find a solution that works for both of us. Sound good?" "I would rather spend my time with you doing fun things and laughing with you more, not worrying about the house stuff so much. Deal? Deal?"

Something like that seems so easy and open for people to hear. Joining with your son, finding solutions rather than pointing fingers, will help both of you ease into the next phase of your relationship. See what you think and pull from what feels right for you.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

Attention please: All those people that you think you just randomly bump into ... We are all on this path together. Lend a hand.

Randi Rabin: Married Woman Leaves But Won't Divorce; Underage Drinking and Social Host Liability

Published on 03.08.2014 11:40 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I fell in love with a married woman, as did she with me eight years ago. I told her if she left her husband we could be together. She left him, but she refuses to divorce him. Her reasons are: 1) his health insurance is better than mine; 2) the longer she stays with him the more money she will get from his retirement/palimony; and 3) it will hurt their grown kids. All I can think is: Will she do this to me?

— *Jeff*

Dear Jeff: When one leaves their current mate for another, there will always be some type of energetic unfinished business. Jumping out of the frying pan into the fire doesn't leave much room for personal growth.

I do believe there are many different ways to be in a relationship if those involved are willing to work at creating what they truly desire. It doesn't have to be a typical version of anything. It can be the recipe that works for you, your partner and everyone involved, providing it carries the elements of honesty, openness and integrity from all parties.

After eight years, something must still be working! Perhaps the idea of being in a relationship but not really being in on the day-to-day workings that make a house run smoothly allows the newness to remain. Still "quasi-dating" after all this time may be the answer to your longevity. She has stated her reasons for staying where she is. What are yours?

Dear Feelings Doctor: Last week, my daughter, who is 16, went to a party where there was drinking. I just found out about it, and I am so angry. She said her friend's father was fine with it. What do I do?

— *Square Dad*

Dear Square Dad: First of all, it is such a dangerous situation for anyone to allow underage drinking to take place in their home. That said, it happens all the time. The consequences are high, and the aftermath can be life-changing. So, have a candid conversation with your teens.

The monetary fine that the parents' are responsible for and the safety of everyone on the property also falls on the homeowner. Let your teenagers know if they feel unsafe, uncertain or uncomfortable at another person's house they have your permission to call any time, day or night! Your main concern is their safety. The "talk" comes after they are home, safe and sound.

The longer a young person waits to try alcoholic substances, the less likely they are to develop a desire for it, and the easier it will be to say no — "no" is the new cool ...

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

There is an inmost center in us all, where truth abides in fullness. To know this innermost center, we must open a way for the "imprisoned splendor" to escape ... — r browning

Expressing our God-given gifts is the inheritance we leave to this world ...

Randi Rabin: Son Grieves Father's Death; Woman Loses Friends After Divorce

Published on 02.27.2014 3:03 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I just lost my dad, and it's been the most difficult, heartbreaking chapter in my life. He was 96, my best friend and mentor, and I spent the last two weeks with him, watching him suffer and then drawing his last breath.

Those images and his pain are living memories for me, even though I try to look at the 50-plus years of him in my life and the great times. A part of me wishes I had not been there to see him in pain, but I knew I had to be to help him move onto the next plain.

I am in a quandary and wonder what is coming next on the emotional freight train headed straight at me. How do I deal with losing a loved one, my dad?

— *Lost in Santa Barbara*

Dear Lost: For a man to lose his father is one of the most challenging, frightening experiences of his life. That said, knowing that you were there for your father through his passing will be a comfort that will guide you through the struggles you are experiencing now.

Be patient with yourself and your emotions, allowing the tears to flow when they show up. This will help you move through the sadness that feels like an emotional freight train right now. Eventually, the heaviness in your heart will be replaced by gentle thoughts and memories of your father. These are the feelings that will hold you strong and keep you going.

Perhaps find other men to talk to and share experiences with regarding your story and the process of expression around your loss.

God bless you, and take comfort in knowing there is the other side of pain and loss that will lead you to the love, honor and wisdom your father handed down to you. These are the memories that will help you carry on.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am recently divorced, living in a small community, and I'm very depressed and alone. My friends I have had for 15 years, sharing carpools and going to PTA meetings, are not standing by me. They act like they don't know me anymore, and I feel left out of my entire life that I have built for so long.

I just want to talk and share what I'm going through with my close friends who care about me, and no one will answer their phone. Is everyone that heartless?

— *J.B. in S.B.*

Dear J.B.: As harsh as this may sound, leave your friends out of this "extremely personal" situation. Call your friends with fun and joy in mind, but leave your private issues for you and a professional to discuss. Nothing is harder than trying to stay neutral when a divorce splits up lives.

Stay strong and positive, remembering why you decided to make this big change to begin with. Happily focus on where you are going, not what you are running away from.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

When we are brave and respectful of the natural cycles of life, we find that each of life's stages has a spiritual dimension. Gratitude leads to love. But not the demanding love, the love of a hunter for his prey. Do not confuse begging love with the generous love that leads to thankfulness. — A.Desjardins

[Randi Rabin: Daughter Walks In on Parents Having Sex; Living with a 'Peter Pan' Type](#)

Published on 02.20.2014 7:20 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: Our daughter walked in on my husband and me having sex last night, and she wouldn't talk to us for the rest of the night. What do we say to her? She is 14.

— *Awkward Parent in Goleta*

Dear AP: Many people have had a similar experience like you described when they were growing up. At 14, your daughter most likely has had sex-education classes at school and knows the basic things.

First, meet her right where she is. Ask her what she is so upset about. She will have her own ideas and questions around this entire incident.

This is the perfect time for you and your husband — well, perhaps just you — to sit down and tell her that loving someone and wanting to be close to that special person is a natural thing in life, and that's exactly how she was born.

Will it gross her out? Yes. Will she ask you to stop now? Yes. And when she begins experimenting with her own special someone, you will have planted those essential seeds of kindness, tenderness and caring with another person who is as special to her as her father is to you. Job well done.

Dear Feelings Doctor: How does a person live with a “Peter Pan” type? How do you get your emotional needs met?

— *T.S. in S.B.*

Dear T.S.: In psychological terms, these men are called *puer aeternus*, meaning eternal youth. They are childlike, fun and exciting, and most of them have come from a family where the father was absent. They have strong ties to their mothers, positively or negatively.

While they are uber exciting in the beginning of a relationship, they are known for being a wanderer, always looking for that perfect mother in every woman. Some men when they reach middle age have begun to get a handle on their “Peter Pan parts” and have actually done some inner work on themselves.

You want to know how to get your needs met? If you want to G. E. T., you have to A. S. K.

This is one guy who really needs a road map, so if you have the patience, let him know what you want. Tell him what you need, show him how to please you. Most Peter Pan partners really do want to grow up by the time they are in their 40s or 50s; they just need a lot of guidance. On the other hand, there are those who love to fly around the world sprinkling their fairy dust on life and have no desire to lose their tights. Which one is at your door?

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

Gratitude is the music of the heart. When its chords are swept by the breeze of kindness. Share your open hand with someone today.

[Randi Rabin: Mom Wants to Open Up to Kids; Boyfriend Struggles to Move Past Breakup](#)

Published on 02.13.2014 6:16 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have trouble stating my feelings to my kids. I have no trouble speaking with my spouse, but to let out my innermost fears and feelings to my children leaves me sitting stone-faced and frozen.

Obviously, this has led to problems in my parental relationships, which I ascribe to my upbringing. Can you suggest any exercises that may assist me to unwind and let loose in front of my adult kids? Thank you.

— *Frigid Parent in Grosse Pointe, Mich.*

Dear Frigid Parent: You risk everything when you risk nothing!

This is a chance for you to step out of that “frigid parent suit” you have been wearing and “jump in” to life with your children. There will never be anything more important for you to do than this right now.

Show your kids that it’s not only OK to take chances, it is vital! No one goes through life without some bumps and bruises.

You say that it probably has something to do with your upbringing. Well, guess what? Now is the time for you to change the entire course of your family dynamic — what a gift! Your parents did the best they could with the resources they had; now it’s your turn. Will the real you please stand up?

Begin by taking that oh-so-important baby step with whatever issue is on your plate right now. If you feel like you need hands-on help, ask your children for advice (don’t be afraid to learn from them) or find a counselor in your town and have them guide you through the beginning.

I congratulate and celebrate you on your grand opening! The world needs everything you have to give, and so do your children. Blessings and peace.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My girlfriend and I broke up two weeks ago, and it feels awful. We had been dating for almost eight years, and now I can’t seem to find anything that makes sense without her.

We had an argument over one of my female co-workers who calls me all the time. My girlfriend doesn’t understand that it’s just business. What do I do now?

— *Busted in SB*

Dear Busted: I'm wondering why you would sign your name "Busted in SB" if there was nothing to get in trouble over. Are you sure you just didn't get plain old busted? I'm not psychic, but when we use certain words to describe what's happening, they usually help tell the real story. Just sayin'.

So if you have anything to share with your beloved partner of eight years, you better put it all out on the table, because not only does she deserve the truth, so do you — whatever that is. Then move on together — really together — or gracefully go your separate ways. If the two of you truly have that special love, it won't be denied by an innocent outsider, so hang on tight if it's the real thing.

Happy Valentine's Day to love and lovers everywhere.

Got a question for *The Feelings Doctor*? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

Great spiritual traditions are used as means to ripen us, to bring us face to face with our life, and to help us to see in a new way by developing a stillness of mind and a strength of heart.

Share the beauty of your heart with the world this Valentine's Day.

[Randi Rabin: Woman Suffers Panic Attacks; Couple Take Intimacy to New Heights](#)

Published on 02.06.2014 3:22 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I recently have been getting nervous and having panic attacks in public places. I sweat and feel like I am going to pass out! I haven't told anyone about this. I am not sure what's going on, and it makes me frightened everyday. My husband just thinks I am in a bad mood all the time. Your advice, please.

— *Anxious in Ventura*

Dear Anxious: Has anything changed in your life lately? Sometimes the slightest thing can have a huge effect on us depending on what else is going on at that time.

Please go see your doctor and discuss everything with him or her. Next, share these important changes with your husband. He should know what is happening in your day-to-day life, especially when it has to do with your health.

Slow down. If you don't have time to be still and meditate (which would be great for you), focus on taking your meditation with you. What I mean by this is, change your focus so that you look at each task throughout your day as a meditation. This will slow down your heart rate, keep you grounded and help you see what may be going on a bit more clearly. Blessings to you.

Dear Feelings Doctor: This is in regards to the wife who talked about how her husband wanted to have sex in random places and how out of character that was for her. I am here to say that my husband and I have been married for 34 years, and last summer on vacation we "did it" in a glass elevator overlooking the city where hundreds of people were passing by! It was amazing ...

We still talk about it all the time, and that memory keeps the fires burning HOT! Who knows where the next place will be? Please print this; it may spark a fire for others.

— *On Top in Santa Barbara*

Dear On Top: Sounds like you and your husband have been a very busy couple! I am pleased that you have such great memories like this to share.

Keeping the fires burning in a deep, connected relationship is a challenge worth taking, and it looks like the two of you have come up with some fun, out-of-the-box, semi-safe ideas. This can also make your intimate moments at home more of a creative and sacred time, too.

Thank you for reminding all of us that the riches of a deep love can change colors forever and become more beautiful over time. That reminds me of the movie [When Harry Met Sally](#). [Estel Reiner](#) says to the waitress, "I'll have what she's having!" Me, too — make mine a double!

Got a question for *The Feelings Doctor*? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

Here's to the amazing gift of a grandfather.

*When his eyes had trouble seeing, his heart knew just where to go.
When his fingers missed the keys on the piano, his voice would gently guide you to the next page.
As his legs began to weaken, his passion for life and family got stronger and stronger.
Such a lesson in bravery the world was given; to share in the life of a remarkable man, husband, father and
grandfather for nearly 100 years.
Here's to you, GRAMPA. Love you big ...*

Randi Rabin: Being Newly Sober in Same Social Settings; Mom Feels Teen Daughter Pulling Away

Published on 01.30.2014 3:36 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am newly sober, and I am having a hard time going out to places again, like bars and the fun places that I would always end up at. My friends say I am being too paranoid.

— Krista in Santa Barbara

Dear Krista: Newly sober, right where you are is a great place to begin. Pay attention to the feelings you are having around the old choices and things that you used to do. Your new behavior and healthy lifestyle needs tender loving care right now — as you do.

Keep going to meetings and hang around your friends who are doing the steps to stay on track, just like you are. This new life that you are creating is one of many blessings. Keep keepin' on girl.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have been reading your column for a while, and I am caught in the middle of a similar situation that you have been writing about. My daughter, who is 14, does not talk to me. We don't share things like we used to at all, and I find myself always arguing with her about everything! Her father works all the time, and I am lost for answers. I can feel her slipping away every day. How can we stop the fights?

— Mrs. B.

Dear Mrs. B: Your teenage daughter is going through changes that need to happen in order for her to grow up and become a woman. But there are ways that the two of you can come together every day, taking baby steps to support each other.

First of all, parents with teens find themselves always talking at their kids instead of with them. There will always be things that you can point out that should have or could have been done differently. Why do that?! Catch your daughter being good; comment on the slightest thing that she does and acknowledge her for them in a positive way. Have weekly check-in sessions, and make them about her. What new song is she listening to? What is the newest fashion thing she is in to? How are her grades, who is her favorite teacher at school, how are the lunches and, most important, is there anything that you can help her with? Continue to keep her accountable for the boundaries and rules that you and your husband have set in your household. These are the critical years when our children begin to differentiate from their family of origin (that means grow up and have their own desires and goals), which is what parents pray for. Make sure you keep open arms to hug her and an open ear to listen.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

*Even in the most peaceful surroundings,
The angry heart finds quarrel.
Even in the most quarrelsome surroundings,
The grateful heart finds peace. — D. Zantamata*

Randi Rabin: Advice for Newly Divorced Dad, and Teen Considering Sex for First Time

Published on 01.23.2014 1:28 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have this friend who is recently divorced. He has children who he loves very much. Most of them are grown, and one is a child with Down syndrome. His wife is making it hard for him to see the children. She has called the cops while they stay over and has made some very harsh statements — none of which are true. I advised him to back away for a while and focus on getting his "new" life back on track. Would you consider this good advice? Peace and love ...

— *Feeling for a friend in Virginia*

Dear Friend: To back away from the ex-wife is perhaps a good idea. To back away from his children, I am not so sure about. Children are always the ones caught in the middle when divorce happens. As difficult as it is for grownups, can you imagine what is going through the mind and heart of a child?

Being kind, thoughtful (that means biting your tongue often) and honoring the family they share should be the first priority. It will be the greatest gift that this friend can give his children.

Half of his kids will always be part of his ex-wife, and the other half will be of him. To shame and dishonor the mother/father is like shaming the children for who they are. It will never be worth it!

Tell your friend to start a yoga class or maybe a boxing class. Suggest that he focus on the direction in which he desires to go instead of what he wants to release. His life will gradually go forward on the right track. Bless you for caring about them all.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I liked your answer for the girl who decided not to have sex with her boyfriend anymore. I am thinking about having sex for the first time with mine and am nervous about it all. Is there advice you can give me? I am 14 years old.

— *Stephanie*

Dear Stephanie: The first piece of advice that I would like to give you is, "PLEASE WAIT!"

Before you decide to go through with this for the first time (the first time only happens once, so make it really special), talk to someone who you will really listen to and hear what he or she might share with you about this topic.

I understand the curiosity and pull as a teenager to explore all the things that are running through your body and mind right now, so take it slow. Have conversations with the people you trust and respect about it.

When we are not sure, waiting is always the best answer.

This bright new day — complete with 24 hours of opportunities, choices and attitudes. A perfectly matched set of 1,440 minutes. This unique gift, this one day, cannot be exchanged, replaced or refunded. Handle with care. Make the most of it. There is only one to a customer.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

"Thirty years from now, it won't matter what shoes you wore, how your hair looked, or the jeans you bought. What will matter is what you learned and how you used it." — from the hallway at [Santa Barbara Middle School](#). Carpe diem ...

[Randi Rabin: Husband Questions Wife's Time with Friends; Sexually Active Teen Has Second Thoug](#)

Published on 01.16.2014 4:29 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My friends and I have been having these amazing dinners with great conversations about "everything" since graduating from college 10 years ago. It is such a huge part of my life. My husband doesn't understand why these times are so important to me. We seem to get into arguments a lot about it.

Help me to help him get it: My girlfriends are a big part of my happy life!

— *Alice in Santa Barbara*

Dear Alice: No matter how truly wonderful your man is, he will never be able to replace the dynamic that girls bring to the table, and honestly, he shouldn't want to. Men like to fix things and women like to share things.

That's why we call it the opposite sex — not just in regards to gender. We really do feel and think about certain things completely different.

That is also the yummy part that keeps everyone coming back for more and doing the dance!

Try this out some night: Make a date with your husband and tell him all the things that you would be sharing with one of your girlfriends — the shoes that hurt your feet all day, the impossible 45 minutes standing in line at the cleaners with an annoying girl on her cell phone talking so loud everyone knows her business, the blouse you wanted at [Nordstrom](#) is discontinued — and then end your story with the nine cookies you really didn't mean to eat for lunch and that's the reason you will be skipping dinner tonight. Believe me, the next time you make plans to go out with your girlfriends, your husband will walk you to the door, escort you out quickly to your car and say, "Have fun, honey! See you later!"

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am a 16-year-old girl at [Santa Barbara High School](#). I have been having sex with my boyfriend for almost seven months now, and I am not sure that I want to continue. We are in the same classes, and it feels bad and wrong now when I see him. Please help me find the words to tell him it's over.
— Jessica

Dear Jessica: First of all, if you are sexually active and cannot wait, use protection. At 16, your body is changing and growing so fast. Mentally and emotionally, you have many years to decide certain things regarding your body and the sacred feelings that go along with sharing yourself with another person.

Sit down and think of what changed for you. Why doesn't it feel like you need it to feel? These are the reasons perhaps only you need to know. Find the words that feel right to you and share them with your boyfriend. Perhaps it should be just friendship now; only you know for sure.

Respecting your body is such an important gift to give yourself as a young woman. It is one of the most valuable lessons to learn.

Honor the special person that you are. If you feel safe in talking to a school counselor or your parents, give that a try, too. Write me again; let's keep in touch.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

According to life experiences, self-confidence is very important. That sort of confidence is not a blind one; it is an awareness of one's own potential. On that basis, human beings can transform themselves by increasing the good qualities and reducing the negative qualities. Anything is possible with a bit of faith, a little elbow grease and a whole lot of focus.

[Randi Rabin: Longtime Friendship Turns One-Sided; Mom Struggles with Empty-Nest Syndrome](#)

Published on 01.09.2014 7:25 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have a problem with a friend I have known for 25 years. Our relationship has become really one-sided for the past five or six years. All he talks about is his life and his world. I know men probably aren't supposed to get their feelings hurt, but it's a real bummer! What do I do to fix this?

— Bummed in Santa Barbara

Dear Bummed: Change is the one thing in the world that continues to happen, even when the good things come up missing. If you have shared your feelings on this subject with your longtime friend and it hasn't gotten any better, perhaps it's time for a rest. Sometimes we grow out of friends (and I know that is a bummer) just like we do our favorite T-shirt or cozy slippers we've had forever.

Our needs and desires change as we grow, so if both of you are all right with that, then perhaps the new "you" can be something different and special in the now, and if not, you have those fun times to remember. Always wish the best for people, and it will come back to you.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have a good life and will be 50 soon. My children have been my focus for so many years, and they are healthy and happy. My husband and I are in our routines every day, and it feels as if there is no point to anything right now. I don't feel like getting up in the morning, and I cry a lot these days.

I could never tell anyone in my family any of this.

— Stacy in Santa Barbara

Dear Stacy: When life is good and going along just fine, we still need challenges that help us grow and feel a sense of self-worth, whether it's the beginning of an empty nest or feeling that new change in your life.

First, make a visit to the doctor to get a clean bill of health. When the activities and pleasures we used to enjoy no longer seem fun, that's a shift that needs to be looked at. Next, find out what that voice is saying to you, the voice that has been pushed to the back of the room while you were happily raising your children — that voice that calls to you and says, "What about this fun project, or this amazing adventure you always loved to do?"

It's your time now. Everyone has been taken care of; it's your turn. Happy 2014.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

Seek what you have

*Dive before the watercourse shrinks
into shallows*

*Find the thread that unravels back to
the shirt you are wearing*

*Travel south of anger, west of resentment, north
of desire and east of envy—*

Find the center of your own silence

*Use every word as if it were a mud brick you shaped
with your own hands*

Stack them carefully—

Celebrate your birthday every day, save the one you were born on

At night, find a bridge to sleep beneath

*Watch for the prize ... it will float in the dark silent silk river just
feet from where you dream*

*In the morning, bathe in its glassy silence and feel the new skin
packing you in like a gold bar swaddled in
blue satin.*

— Dennis P. Slattery

Randi Rabin: How Can I Stay Active and Fit in New Year at Age 60?

Published on 01.02.2014 4:29 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I just turned 60, and I am wondering how to stay fit and exercise in this new year in a way that won't hurt me. Thank you.

— Kathy

Dear Kathy: There are several fun things that will keep you moving safely that are less strenuous than other exercise routines. As long as you have no major injuries, you should be fine. Please check with your doctor and get the go-ahead just to be sure.

Walking daily is actually just as beneficial as jogging and more enjoyable for those who want to see the sights and smell the roses along the way. Light weightlifting to maintain some muscle mass is also a good idea, and will keep your core strong and aligned as things change. Dancing, biking and warm yoga classes are also low-impact workouts that may be to your liking.

Begin with a trainer to make sure you are doing all the movements and exercises properly; good form will last forever, and having a happy mental attitude is also part of staying healthy.

So dance, sing and share your smile with others. Happy 2014!

Dear Feelings Doctor: My wife and I had her family for the Christmas holiday this year. What a disaster! The first few days weren't so bad, but as the days passed they began to show their real colors and it wasn't pretty — sitting with their feet up on my sofa waiting to be served constantly for six days! We held our feelings in and the celebration that should have been a blessing turned out to be a nightmare.

How could we have handled this awful situation?

— T.S. in S.B.

Dear T.S.: This is an ongoing dilemma with anyone who has family, so don't feel singled out. You know the hair on the back of your neck? Well, when it starts tingling and standing up, you know that something in your life isn't sitting well with you and that means: Share your words!

I know it sounds childlike and not really important, but that could not be further from the truth. When things in our lives feel off, or people in our lives behave in a way that makes us not feel safe or good, it really is OK to express what's up, and it is most helpful to do it the moment you feel those shifts happen. Holding those feelings in creates more stress and anxiety.

This means lovingly setting your boundaries so that everyone understands what's expected and desired around your holiday celebration: Help out, clean up and pitch in. With all that said, we all have those family gatherings that end up on the cutting room floor. Your attempt was a wonderful thing, my friend, and next Christmas, book a family trip to the Bahamas!

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

I knew a woman who as a young girl went through her daily life never hearing the words "I love you" from her mother or father. As she grew up, she vowed to herself that with her own family, her children would hear those words each and every day — no matter what. She kept her promise, and the gift of those precious words blossomed and grew in the heart of each child born to this family. Generation after generation have kept her dream and her promise alive by sharing her precious present of love with their families, their friends and anyone else who hangs around for a while.

Blessings of peace and love to you all in this new year of possibilities. ... Happy birthday, Cheryl!

Randi Rabin: Husband Wants to Role Play; Counseling for Present, Not Past, Problems

Published on 12.26.2013 3:33 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have been happily married for 24 years. My husband and I are the couple who everyone looks up to for advice and occasional guidance.

For months now, my hubby has been pestering me to have sex in the grocery store. He is constantly suggesting games to play in public, things to wear that are not me and other outrageous role-playing scenarios.

Please help me figure out what to do here. Thank you.

— *Ashley in Los Angeles*

Dear Ashley: Role-play for happily married, connected couples is a great way to stay in touch with each other's fantasies. The two of you must have complete trust and know that the deeper you go within the relationship, the deeper your passion and desire can go, too.

Keep in mind that respect and honor are two key ingredients for couples to be able to share private moments like this. So, become that cheerleader again, or the firefighter who saves the day. And perhaps the grocery store idea will have to wait; you really don't want to get arrested in the name of love! Good luck, and happy 2014.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have never been to a therapist, and I am struggling with issues that I don't want to discuss with my friends. I am not interested in the past or my family or my childhood. What type of counselor would you suggest?

— *Cathy in Carpinteria*

Dear Cathy: There are a few types of therapy that may fit what you are looking for.

Solution focused is the one that I would recommend from the information you have given me here — working with present issues as opposed to the past.

The moment you make the appointment, things will begin to shift in a positive direction for you. Good luck, and happy 2014.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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It has always been thought that one cannot hold faith and fear at the same time. I believe that you can. Perhaps courage is fear that has said its prayers.

[Robert Fulghum](#) has suggested in his book *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, "Hold hands while crossing the street, look both ways before you go. Be polite, say please and thank you. The simple things in our lives give us the biggest blessings."

Here's to simplicity and bliss in 2014. May your heart remain open and your challenges be met with courage and grace.

Randi Rabin: Letting Teen Son Stay Out Late, and Adding 'HaHaHa' to Family Holiday Gatherings

Published on 12.19.2013 3:19 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My wife and I usually agree on most things; that is, except when it comes to the hours our 13-year-old son likes to keep. So maybe I'm a tad conservative, but I don't think that at 10:30 p.m. on a Saturday I should be driving my son and a friend over to a party that started at 8 p.m., let alone picking them up at almost 1 a.m.! He's only 13!

Am I not with the times here? Is that really OK?

— *Split Decision in Santa Barbara*

Dear S.D.: I understand your predicament and also want to share with you that more important than a curfew is knowing where your son is, who he is with and what they are doing. Curfews are necessary but not a substitute or replacement for hands-on parenting.

When you drop your son off at someone's home at 10:30 p.m., do you know the parents? If so, then it is always a good idea to say hello, ask what time pickup is scheduled and know that your son is in really good hands. The teenage years are scary because of all the new territory that is being discovered in several different areas of the life.

What keeps our children protected from dangerous activities is dialogue and conversation. What stems from that is a wonderful, open, loving relationship.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I love the holidays, really. It's just that my family (and I'm sure no one else has this problem) always points out the things that I haven't changed, or the things that I have changed and shouldn't have!

I can't win with my family, and I don't want to be a part of the crazy holiday this year. How can I show up and just have a good time?

— *Holiday Humbug in Los Angeles*

Dear Humbug: Sounds like you need to add some HaHaHa to your HoHoHo season for sure. I have been asked this question each and every year, and it can get easier — believe me.

If you decide to show up and be part of the festivities, do so with an open mind and celebrating on your mind. Otherwise, what's the point? Sometimes our ongoing dynamics with our family of origin continues even after we have grown out of it. After the holidays, decide when the right time would be to have conversations regarding just what it is that has been on your mind — share who you are these days with your family, not who you used to be.

Telling some of the funny stories you all may remember together as a family lightens everyone's heart. Never underestimate the power of laughter — even during the crazy times like holidays!

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

Nothing is permanent:

The sun and the moon rise and then set,

The bright clear day is followed by the deep, dark night.

From hour to hour, everything changes.

Worry about nothing, pray about everything.

Randi Rabin: 'Fun Guy' Who Doesn't Enjoy Girlfriend's Kids Should Move Along

Published on 12.12.2013 3:46 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have a wonderful girlfriend who has two high school children. I have raised my own family, and now all I want is to have fun. I really do enjoy being around my girl, but her kids I am not down with. What should I do to move things along?

— *Fun Guy in Santa Barbara*

Dear Fun Guy: I hear you say you want to enjoy your life and "just have fun" with your girl. Everyone should celebrate each day that they have above ground in a big way! So, you should find someone without children or a woman whose children are already out of the house.

Really, would you want a woman who would choose you over her kids? Honestly? And if you truly have no time or desire to engage them, they already know it. Kids from a divided family don't need any more reasons to feel bad about what's going on in their lives. Sounds like you're the one who needs to move along.

Dear Feelings Doctor: Thank you so much for your upbeat and cheerful attitude with your column. It is such a welcomed treat to my week. Keep the messages and guidance coming. I just love it.

— *Karen in Santa Barbara*

Dear Karen: Thank you for reading and enjoying the column. Share it with your friends, family, co-workers and even strangers! It's all about communicating; and the more we all can do it, the easier our day, our week and our lives will become. Less stress, more bless.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

*Happiness is a butterfly
which when pursued,
is just beyond your grasp ...
but if you sit down quietly,
may alight upon you.*

— [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#)

[Randi Rabin: Sending Clear Message to Friend About Phone; New You for New Year](#)

Published on 12.05.2013 2:22 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have a friend who I drive to work with every day. He always takes calls when I'm riding with him in the car. He doesn't tell the people on the phone I'm there, and I've overheard a lot of personal conversations. It makes me uncomfortable. I've told him it bothers me, but he's just fine with it. What should I do?

— *William in Santa Barbara*

Dear William: Ouch. That's kind of uncomfortable for sure! Sounds like you need to mention that to your friend again, and perhaps again.

Explain to him the stress that it puts on your relationship, and if the two of you are solid buddies, hopefully he will get the message. If not, it may be time to take the bus. Setting boundaries with others is a constant; if you don't do it now, it will keep coming around again. You teach people how to treat you by what you allow, what you stop and what you reinforce.

Dear Feelings Doctor: The new year is just around the corner. I know I'm going to make the same resolutions I always make — to get in shape and live a healthier, happier life. Can you give me a few tips to help me turn this year into the one where I really do that? Thanks.

— *The Same Old Me*

Dear Same: This year what will truly make the difference in all those promises and resolutions that you have made in the past is this: *take action!*

One baby step at a time in the direction of your goal, and guess what? A fresh start just happened! After the fresh start comes a pattern. After the pattern of healthier choices comes a habit, and before you even have time to realize it, you have made the change that you've wanted for so long.

Here's a toast to a promising new year and a new you.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

Music: the other nonaddictive, mood-altering non-substance. Ask your doctor if music is right for you. Common side effects include but are not limited to: uncontrolled head bobbing, toe tapping, selective hearing impairment and persistent melody flashbacks. Happy Friday.

Randi Rabin: Tips to Handle Difficult Family Situations During the Holidays

Published on 11.28.2013 9:04 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I need your best advice for my situation. This will be the first year that my kids and I will be around my ex-husband and his new girlfriend for the holidays. We were married for 13 years, and my children and I don't know how to act in this uncomfortable situation. Please tell me what I should do.

— *Shelly*

Dear Shelly: Sometimes it takes a little longer than other times to have the proper words and actions around this extended family issue. There seems to be so much pressure for everything to be perfect around the holidays that the added stress of “saying the right thing” gets magnified beyond reality. I bet that you and your children have many things to be thankful for, and hopefully their dad is one of them. Remembering what brought you and your ex together to make your beautiful family is a good place to start. Your kids will take their cues from you, so smile, be polite and give thanks for where you are now. Offer up your blessing of peace to everyone at the table.

This is the time for new beginnings all around.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have certain family members who I don't get along with, and every holiday we pretend that things are different than what they really are. I am not in the mood this year for the sloppy, hurtful conversations that begin after way too many glasses of wine! What can I do to get through these next few days and not be mean?

— *Kathy in Lompoc*

Dear Kathy: That, my friend, is the seasonal question! This is truly not the right time to attempt to figure out any of the answers.

Be polite and make nice; it will all be over soon. Besides, during the holidays, people eat too much, drink too much, say too much and don't remember enough. This is not the day for figuring any of it out. Relax and have a second helping of “Peace On Earth.”

Got a question for *The Feelings Doctor*? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

Beauty Tips from Audrey Hepburn

For attractive lips, speak words of kindness.

For lovely eyes, seek out the good in people.

For a slim figure, share your food with the hungry.

For beautiful hair, let a child run their fingers through it at least once a day.

For poise, walk with the knowledge that you never walk alone.

People, even more than things have to be restored, renewed, revived, reclaimed, and redeemed; never throw out anyone.

Remember if you ever need a helping hand, you will find one at the end of your arms.

As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands, one for helping yourself and the other for helping others.

Randi Rabin: Offering a Helping Hand on Thanksgiving; Pursuing Options for College

Published on 11.21.2013 2:33 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I live in Santa Barbara and have been reading [Noozhawk](#) for months now. I really would like your opinion on an appropriate facility to volunteer for on this Thanksgiving holiday. I do believe there are a few, but I am not familiar with which one would be in need of a helping hand. Thank you, and happy holiday.

— CaryAnn

Dear CaryAnn: This is a wonderful holiday to lend a helping hand, and yes, there are several places in our community that would be so grateful for your assistance.

Whether you wish to serve dinner at the [Santa Barbara Rescue Mission](#) or bring blankets to the [Transition House](#), anything that a concerned citizen feels is right ... is right.

Begin with the first step: It's going to be getting a little colder in the following days, so any items that you have at home that would be useful to another person, bag them up and drop them at [Casa Esperanza](#). It also has names of families who would love a turkey dinner at most of the banks in town. The [Unity Shoppe](#) is another wonderful facility that always needs nonperishable food items for its shelves.

It's a great time of year to open our hearts to others. Thank you for being one of those people.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My husband and I are struggling to find a way for our daughter to continue her schooling and perhaps go to college. Neither one of us finished high school, so for us to see our only daughter excited about her grades and her accomplishments but not be able to keep going is hard.

I am sad about it, and my husband and I argue too much because we don't know what to do. Please talk with us about our problem. Thank you.

— Rosa in Santa Barbara

Dear Rosa: It sounds like you have raised a very hardworking, bright girl. She got that from someone in the family!

There are several avenues to explore, and did you know that every year thousands of dollars in scholarships are offered and many of them go unclaimed because no one has attempted to dig that deep and find these hidden jewels? Do some research with the local colleges and make an appointment with a counselor on staff. He or she will steer you in the proper direction, and absolutely go online with all your questions and for more information.

Where there is a will, there is always a way. Good luck to you and your family.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

Right now, and in every now-moment, you are either closing or opening. You are either stressfully waiting for something — more money, security, affection — or you are living from your deep heart, opening as the entire moment, and giving what you most deeply desire to give, without waiting.

Randi Rabin: Staying Connected with Our Kids; Giving Holiday Gifts with Meaning

Published on 11.14.2013 1:28 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My husband and I have three children all in high school. With busy lives, doors always swinging one way or the other and with people dashing here and there, I feel there is no time for what really matters — connecting with our kids. Advice, please!

— Charlotte

Dear Charlotte: Over and over again, I have parents ask me what to do so their children, ranging in ages 5 to 21, will know that they care about them. Seriously, “What do I do with my son; he is falling behind in his schoolwork?” “What do I say to my daughter about her choice in friends?”

If you as a parent are present for your children, whether it be picking them up from school and being hands-on every day, or making it home in time for dinner so that the family can bond over breaking bread, or perhaps a hurried parent who barely has time to tuck their children in at night after a long, hard day, so

many families have extremely busy schedules just to keep things running smoothly. Once again, it is the quality of time spent, not the quantity.

What's important is what you say to your children, how you let them know without a doubt that they are so important to you and that you are there for them no matter what. If you let them know, even though you leave the house early in the morning and come back after dark, that there is always time for a talk, that the door to your heart is always open for any kind of discussion they need, then they will grow up in the safety of that thought, knowing that they matter every day.

If possible, give them your cell phone number and make sure that when they call you, always answer it. Everyone else can wait!

Dear Feelings Doctor: It's that time of the season when I try to think of special ways to give back to my community and my relatives with gifts that have meaning and not just a price tag. Any suggestions?

Thanks.

— *Mona in Santa Barbara*

Dear Mona: This is the new millennium challenge, my friend! With so many wonderful nonprofits connecting us to clean water projects or sending medicine to Third World countries, there are several available right here in Santa Barbara. Sending chickens to a village in your family's name or supporting a girl through college who may never go otherwise, these things are all possible.

These giving ideas that you set in motion now will go on generation after generation in your family circle, while making a powerful and important difference in another person's life forever. Here are two that may be of interest: GirlUp.org and MAIApparel.com.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

"The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve." — Dr. A. Schweitzer

[Randi Rabin: Longing to Be Noticed; Reconnecting with Friend Out of Rehab](#)

Published on 11.07.2013 2:53 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I can't believe that I am really writing to you! Only because no one will ever know that it's me.

I am 38 years old and always been on the shy side. I work in an accounting firm, and I feel invisible — I have most of my life.

[Your column about the breast implants](#) was something I have been thinking about for 10 years. I just want to feel different in my body, and different in my life, too! Is it wrong to want to stand out just a little bit and get noticed just once?

— *Jen*

Dear Jen: It's a big step that you have taken to share your story here. Thank you for being brave. Wanting to be noticed and truly seen is something that every human longs for. Whatever your vision is for feeling better about your appearance, you deserve to feel the best that you can every day. If that means enhancing your image, go for it.

I would also recommend that you talk to a professional about the reasons you have been hiding for so long; those issues should be addressed as well. The way we look and feel about our bodies perhaps helps us with our outside image. The way we respond to our spirit and our soul can only come from the true meaning we give to who and what and why we are here. That is the true journey worth taking ...

Dear Feelings Doctor: My best girlfriend just got out of a rehab facility/home. She was there for 90 days somewhere in Texas. I really want to see her and find out how she is doing, but I am scared. How do I handle our relationship now? And what if she is different?

— *Patty in Santa Barbara*

Dear Patty: You can be scared and still do the right thing! Call your "best girlfriend" and let her know that you are here to support her and the new chapter that she is starting in her life.

Your relationship will probably be different — perhaps better than before. Who knows? And for sure, your friend will be different. She has been on a 90-day trek to self-discovery and rebirthing of sorts. Check in with her and you may find that the two of you have even more in common these days.

Got a question for *The Feelings Doctor*? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

I am a spiritual being, unfettered and free. Unlimited by former thoughts and feelings, I take a new look at myself, a new look at my life, and declare my spiritual dominion. Let the magic begin ...

[Randi Rabin: Sacrifices in a Relationship; Website for Affairs Raises Concern](#)

Published on 10.31.2013 1:55 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My boyfriend and I live together in Los Angeles and have a really great relationship. There is just one tiny little thing that has been on my mind lately. We need to move for his job, and I cannot see leaving the place where I was born.

How do we both make sacrifices for the better of our relationship? Thank you for your help.

— *Lorie in Los Angeles*

Dear Lorie: Sounds like you and your boyfriend have a nice relationship. Without knowing how old you both are, I'm curious about one thing. You said "we need to move" for his job. So, let's talk about that. Is it true? Do you really need to move for his job? There's something underneath here that you haven't explained yet. Do you have a job, too? Are you wondering if you both will be all right if he moves for his job and you stay where you are now, which is where you say you want to be? Sometimes setting boundaries with our lives is a wonderful thing. It's what's supposed to happen when people are young and figuring things out.

Have a candid conversation with your boyfriend and talk about what is on your mind and on your heart. That always works wonders for everyone. And besides that, miles can never break the chain of true love.

Dear Feelings Doctor: There is a new website that has been showing up everywhere that is making my friends and me very nervous. It's this website for married people to be with other married people who want extramarital affairs — discretely. The initials are A.M. What do I do with that?

— *Lost in LA ...*

Dear Lost: Our society and the way things operate these days has changed 150 degrees from our past generations. With online *everything*, there is not much left to anyone's imagination.

What still works and will always work is having a conversation with another person. This will still be in style when the baggy pants are long gone. Talk with your mate! If you have to schedule time in between the kids' soccer and dentist, make sure that the two of you have uninterrupted time to just be together and let go of all the stuff that makes couples nutty! That will never go out of style, trust me. Humans are made that way, and that's the way it will stay.

Good luck, and write and tell me how things are going with your newfound connection with your longtime mate. Blessings and peace.

Got a question for *The Feelings Doctor*? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

"As long as we live in this world, we are bound to encounter problems. If, at times, we lose hope and become discouraged, we diminish our ability to face difficulties. If, on the other hand, we remember that it is not just ourselves but also everyone who has to undergo suffering, this more realistic perspective will increase our determination and capacity to overcome troubles." — Insight from the Dalai Lama

[Randi Rabin: Woman's New Breasts Lead the Way; Wife Worried Husband Is Seeking Mail-Order Bride](#)

Published on 10.24.2013 1:33 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I recently had breast implants and my boyfriend loves them. So do I! My problem is that all of my girlfriends are a bit standoffish now that my breasts lead the way.

I went from a 34C to a DD, and they are beautiful. I get lots of attention — usually from men, and most of them are my girlfriends' husbands. How can I keep my friendship with the women in my life the way it used to be? Thanks.

— *Betsy Boob*

Dear BB: Thanks for sharing, Betsy. You say that you are aware of your breasts leading the way. Well, here are some of the things that may also be changing in your life: the way you are perceived by others, and perhaps the energy that you now carry about who you are. This does not have to be a negative thing, but it is an issue that you will need to deal with.

Try having an open discussion with your girlfriends about what is going on, and if by chance you are overly friendly with "other women's men," you may need to step back a bit — literally.

This doesn't mean you need to carry a dictionary with you all the time or a hardbound copy of *War and Peace* so people know that you have a brain, too. Just be aware that in our society breasts are a big part of why men are tempted to stare! It is also one of the first things that can be noticed from a distance. And let's face it, from the time of the caveman, first impressions carry a lot of weight.

If you are wearing low cut, extremely revealing outfits and leading with your "girls," rethink what kind of picture you want to paint here. You do not get a second chance to make a first impression!

Dear Feelings Doctor: I recently found several links to a mail order bride company in Russia on my husband's computer. I am nervous about what I saw and don't know how to approach him.

We have been having trouble and a lot of silence in our marriage lately, so he could be looking for other outlets of happiness and fulfillment that don't include me. What should I do here?

— *Angie*

Dear Angie: When a couple have been in a relationship for a long time and their lives have become too predictable, it's time to shake it up a bit! Remember when you two were dating? Just thinking about the beginning of your relationship and the excitement that went soaring through your bodies will stimulate and activate those neurons that perhaps have been dormant for a while.

I am not ignoring the issue of the "Russian bride" link on his computer, so here's what may help: Have a candid, heart-to-heart discussion of where you both are in your relationship. Talk about the need for him to go outside your sacred connection to find excitement (if indeed that is what happened).

Next discuss the desire of wanting to create a new, stronger bond for the two of you in this present day and time. Talk about what that looks like for both of you, then do it! Take the time to cultivate those different feelings of expression that are there. Explore new places inside the sacred space of your relationship.

Believe me, there is something "really special" about nurturing a connection that you have had for years and finding that special golden nugget that has been there all along.

Polish that nugget up, hold it where it can reflect the sunlight and you will be amazed at all the new facets it will bring to your lives.

Got a question for *The Feelings Doctor*? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

What if we were capable of leaving something behind when we departed from this world? I mean really leaving something behind that is so grand others will be talking about it and sharing it for seasons and years to come.

We are you know, so let's do it. Let's leave a "Legacy of Love" for the world. Perhaps it could turn the tide and make that insurmountable change that we have all been dreaming and praying for.

I'll start if you will! Actually, I'll start even if you're not quite ready yet.

"If you don't build your dream, someone else will hire you to help them build theirs." — D ambani

[Randi Rabin: How Can I Get My Adult Siblings to Forgive and Forget?](#)

Published on 10.17.2013 7:12 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have a wonderful family! Sisters, brothers — there are 11 of us. We try to get together for holidays as much as possible — or at least we used to. Here is the big problem: Two of my siblings haven't spoken in a long time to each other, and it is beginning to affect our entire family. How can I get these grownups to forgive and forget?

— *Stubborn Family in San Diego*

Dear Stubborn Family: Without knowing what happened between your siblings, and it may not matter as much about what happened as why it happened; often times people stay mad and angry for so long, if you asked them why, they may not even remember. Here's the deal: Do you want to be right, or do you want to have a relationship?

"Family is a nonrenewable resource." It sounds like it is time to figure this out. The holidays are soon approaching.

Perhaps try inviting the "two who need to talk things out" over to your house and have a gentle, safe, opening of the heart of the matter. Whatever it was or is, things can always be discussed and a peaceful conclusion may be just around the corner. Saying I'm sorry can heal so many things, and once a rupture in any relationship has occurred, that is the place for an opening of light to come through.

See what's going on now, in the present. Hopefully it will be a wonderful, reflective experience for all involved. Every human being wants to feel loved, be truly seen and feel they have been heard.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I'm writing about my family — me, my husband and our two sons, who are 11 and 6 years old. My growing concern is that my boys play too rough. We have been to the emergency room more times than I really care to count.

My husband says it's a normal thing for boys to be rough, that boys will be boys! I need some advice for my family. Thank you.

— *Exhausted Mom in Santa Barbara*

Dear Exhausted Mom: I agree with your concern regarding the safety of your two sons. There will always be an element of aggression when it comes to boys roughhousing, but this is something else all together.

Your 11-year-old is in no position to be abusing the 6-year-old in any way.

It is normal for kids to play, and sometimes the play ends in tears because someone got their feelings hurt, but having the severity of the hospital visits is unacceptable. When children are around the same age, it is called a mutual affray. This does not sound like what is happening here.

Put an end to the violent play now. Have a discussion with your husband and the boys and find safe, family games to play so your sons get the exercise and physical outlet they need. This does not include trips to the E.R.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

*Love heals renews inspires and empowers us
to do great things. Makes us feel safe and brings
us closer to God*

*All love is based on the search for spirit
Falling in love is undeniably an act of the soul
Being desirable means being comfortable
with your own ambiguity.*

*The most ambiguous reality is
that we are flesh and spirit at the same time.
Within everyone there is light and shadow.
good and evil, love and hate.*

*In order to be truthful,
you must embrace your total being.
A person who exhibits both positive and
negative qualities, strengths and weaknesses
is not flawed, but complete.*

— Rumi

Randi Rabin: If Marriage Counseling Isn't Working, Allow Time for Healing

Published on 10.10.2013 3:12 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My wife and I have been going to counseling for almost a year now and have made little progress. It seems like we take a tiny step forward and four giant steps back. I'm exhausted and frustrated beyond belief. Help!

— *At My Wit's End in Santa Barbara*

Dear Wit's End: You know what it feels like when you have a splinter in your hand that just keeps getting sore? You poke around and move the skin to hopefully get it out, and it gets more tender and red? That's the way it is sometimes with relationships.

When you are discussing feelings, all of your emotions and issues come to the surface, things get shifted around and you lose your balance a bit. You regroup, leave things alone for a while, celebrate your life and after a breather, if it's really an important, pressing issue, begin again.

If it seems to be just "stuff" and the two of you forgot how to dance together, look at that. If you both are just poking each other because that's what the two of you do, find a new, peaceful/fun way to communicate. Your relationship does not need to be discussed every day. Pick one day a week to check in and touch base, then leave it alone and let the splinter and the sore spot heal.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My husband and I are the proud parents of our miracle baby girl who we have waited for forever! Our lives are what we've dreamed about, and I want to be the perfect mother for her and let her know how special she is to us, and — that she is adopted.

She's turning 5, and we have discussed this issue for a few years trying to find the perfect words. Please help us.

— *Proud Mother in Los Angeles*

Dear Proud Mother: Congratulations on your wonderful family. Adoption is an amazing gift for so many people, and the way you have described your emotions about your daughter *are* the right words. When you and your husband begin explaining what the word adoption means, let your daughter know that you chose her to make your family complete, she is the special girl that you were waiting for.

Keeping pictures of her birth if you have them and openly discussing what the word adoption means will help her as she grows up to know it as a positive experience in her life. There are also books on adoption for children that will be helpful for you.

Wanting to be the "perfect parent" may put undo pressure on you. On the other hand, being the mother you are already, with the perfect loving spirit for your girl, is exactly what she needs. And so do you. Blessings to all.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

You cannot spend 5 minutes in
the morning affirming that
all is well ...
and spend the rest of the day
proving that it is not.

Randi Rabin: How Can We Set Boundaries for Nosy Neighbors?

Published on 10.03.2013 2:18 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have some nosy neighbors who just won't give my husband and me any privacy! It's ridiculous the way they poke around and stick their heads over our fence just to say hi. What do I do? We really need our space!

— *Needs Privacy in Oxnard*

Dear Needs Privacy: There is a difference in being nosy and a simple attempt to get to know you. Have you been neighbors for a long time?

Believe it or not, it is really an old-fashioned, wonderful idea to say hello and have a conversation with the people who are in your neighborhood. What if you needed them for anything, like getting your mail or turning off sprinklers when you are out of town? Anything is possible.

How about this: Go over and bring them flowers from your garden or apples from your tree (examples here) and say hello. Visit with them and drop hints to your desire for more privacy in general, no fingers being pointed, and that is why you moved to this cozy, beautiful home. You may be surprised at how charming and pleasant your new neighbors are.

If that backfires, write me again and we will take it from there. Happy neighboring.

Dear Feelings Doctor: In a world of fast everything, how does a shy guy even get noticed? I am not bad looking, educated and divorced with two kids. I would like to meet a woman who has some ethics and old-fashioned charm. Is that even a possibility? Thanks.

— *Shy Guy in Santa Barbara*

Dear Shy Guy: There are so many new places that people can meet like-minded singles these days, such as art classes and museums, new restaurant openings, cooking classes, yoga classes and one of my favorites is the Adult Ed classes that they offer in towns across the country. Stick your neck out a bit, put your line in the water and see what happens.

It sounds like an exciting new time in your life. Santa Barbara offers so many great varieties of options, such as [1st Thursdays](#) or the [movies on the Courthouse lawn](#). Perhaps taking French lessons or a bike trip somewhere with a singles' group.

Options, my friend; there are many options here. So pick one to start with and carry on from there. Carpe diem!

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

*Your time here is limited,
so don't waste it
living someone else's life.
Don't be trapped by dogma-
which is living with the results
of other people's thinking.
Don't let the noise of others
opinions drown out your
own inner voice.
And most important, have
the courage to follow your
heart and intuition. They
somehow already know what
you truly want to become.
Everything else is secondary.
Stay Hungry.
Stay Foolish.
— S. Jobs*

Randi Rabin: How Can I Get My Son to Turn Off His Violent Video Games?

Published on 09.26.2013 5:26 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My son is obsessed with [Call of Duty](#) and all those violent games that teenagers play. I have asked him to limit the time that he plays them, but he will not listen and continues for hours. His grades aren't so good, and he doesn't care. Please help me with this.

— *Exhausted Mom in Santa Barbara*

Dear Exhausted Mom: Yikes, I completely understand! In our world today, most people (kids and adults alike) would rather text, play video games, [Skype](#), [Vibe](#) and anything else they can do virtually rather than

be in “real time” with others. There are recent statistics that state people would rather give up their televisions, and some even their pets, before they would give up their computers!

So, here are a few things that may assist you in your quest to communicate with your son. You haven’t said how old your son is, so I am giving you a broad scope of helpful ideas. I hope they are useful for the two of you.

First of all, explain to your son that there will be new rules in the house beginning immediately and they must be followed. If not, there will be consequences. His grades are important, and study time must come first before any games are allowed. Second, try to have dinner with the entire family at least two or three times a week. I realize this may be a challenge because families are extremely busy with work and other demands on the day, but do the best you can. This will help solidify the desire to have the family behave differently and stay more connected. When *you* take the time, they will see that it’s possible and they will follow suit.

Last but definitely not least, always — always — make time to talk to your son about his day, his friends, classes, girls, teachers, the food at lunch time and anything that can keep your loving bond in place as they move through their young adult life into a true bonafide grown-up.

You may have to go to extreme measures and have the [PS3](#) or whatever game player you have at home removed or disconnected until his grades are up, or put a block on those channels you don’t want him to have access to. Sounds kind of severe, but that’s what it takes sometimes to get the attention you are seeking. I wish you good luck. Let me know how it goes.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I’m divorced and dating again. It seems everyone wants to text all the time. I don’t get it. I want a man to call me up and ask me out. I hate all this texting. What happened to romance?

— *Miss Romance*

Dear Miss Romance: I’m LOL — Laughing Out Loud. Re-entering the dating world can be like crawling out of a time machine.

Texting is the way of the world now. It can be a great, fun way to flirt. If it feels right to you, be playful and have fun with it and you might find you enjoy passing love notes with someone you are interested in. You can keep your old-fashioned ways, too, by letting the man you are dating know what you like. In addition to texting, let him know that you like talking on the phone and talking with a real person and you would like him to plan ahead and ask you out.

Embrace your new world and enjoy the adventures you’ll soon be having.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

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Imagine This ...

As you read this, try to remember the very first time you were moved. I mean really moved or touched by something like a group of clouds, or a bird passing back and forth barely touching his wings in the pool as he attempts to bathe in the afternoon sun. Or a riveting conversation you had with a dear friend about family, friends, food, growing up, growing old, growing weary.

Let all of these things touch the deepest part of you, allow them to hold your spirit, because after all, these things, these people in our lives that see us, make us aware of our human elements,. They are the riches that we will always and forever hold sacred. The tenderness of life is what allows us to smile and carry on.

Don’t pretend you cannot see the person passing you in the aisle at the grocery store. Extend a greeting of hello. Stop and let someone else go first at the cleaners this time. Just smile at life because it feels good and you know what can happen? Anything ...

[Randi Rabin: How Can I Speak Up if No One Seems to Care What I Think? Need to take care of me ?](#)

Published on 09.12.2013 2:41 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I just read [your last Friday column](#) and I was so impressed! The way you gently reminded that woman she will be older no matter what she chooses to do. You said it in such a kind way. I am wondering if you could guide me as well?

I have trouble speaking my mind, and things around me just seem to happen without my opinion or input. No one cares what I think, and I am afraid to say anything because people always seem to leave if you don’t please them. I don’t want to end up alone. Thank you.

— *Maureen in Santa Barbara*

Dear Maureen: Because you have asked this question, it is time for you to begin your journey to healing. Holding yourself hostage is not the place you need to be in anymore. Know that all the past hurt, sadness and pain can be transformed by the power of love.

We hear those words being tossed around all the time, and for good reason — they are so powerful and indeed will heal the hardened, saddest of hearts. As you begin speaking your mind and sharing who you are with others, see yourself letting go of negative memories, criticisms, feelings of injustice and hurt to you and those in your life.

It's time for love to lead the way — beginning with *you*.

Two ways to do this are with the act of release and the act of forgiveness. If you seek to overcome your own difficulties and make real progress in life, you must forgive. When we are able to do that, the release of negative attitudes and memories will begin and you will be on your way to a fulfilling, happy, abundant life. This is one of the wonderful, universal laws: When one's heart is filled with love, they are never alone ... everybody wants some.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have tried to slow down over the past five years, and it seems like I keep finding things to distract me. I need to take better care of myself, but everyone else needs me, too. My health is not so good, and I could use your advice. Thank you.

— *S.D. in Ventura*

Dear S.D.: You say that you have a difficult time slowing down because you get distracted. What's distracting you? Is it a diversion? Is it truly something you love that is taking up your time? Ask yourself these questions and allow a time of silence to truly hear what the answer might be.

If there are things that you are uncomfortable looking at, they won't go away by ignoring them. Take some time and see what's really going on.

The next item up for discussion is taking better care of yourself. A checkup and doctor's visit is on the list. Make sure that you have the go-ahead to begin some type of exercise and then, how about a gym membership or just plain old walking the beach or hills? Plan excursions with everyone who needs you so they can benefit from your newfound healthy-wealth. Cheers.

• • •

Imagine This ...

Take a moment today and sit — just sit, really still. Close your eyes and listen, taking in the smells around you, hearing the sounds of distant birds singing their best mating, love songs. Pick up pieces of the wind chanting melodies from distant worlds, and just be ...

Witness as Mother Nature paints her most beautiful sunset for all of us to embrace. It's like the most pure, nurturing compost from a planet that needs our love and devotion. Like a lover who sings her passionate, tender love songs for her muse.

Give, give and give again to that tiny voice inside of you that says, "Hello, I'm here. What's up?" And then, share that blessing with the world.

Three cheers to that amazing, miraculous journey of self-discovery!

Whether you're 20, 40, 60 or 90, say yes to each day with the eyes of that innocent explorer. And as my dear friend, Will, would say, "Good on ya!"

P.S. Always be kind to yourself ...

[Randi Rabin: How Can I Help My Young Son Deal with Bullies? Too Old to go back to School?](#)

Published on 09.05.2013 5:56 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My son is in the third grade and he is being bullied! We live in a nice community, and he goes to a great public school. They have assembly meetings about this type of thing and it still happens. He is so young. How can I help him with this? Thank you for helping me.

— *Sheila in Santa Barbara*

Dear Sheila: Bullying is not a fun thing to deal with, and it will happen even when the school and parents attempt to stop it before it begins. Talk to your son and find out how long it has been going on, who it is and let him know that this type of behavior is not OK. Get the school, teacher and also the other parents

involved. This may sound like an extreme response, but if this is stopped and taken care of immediately, it will send signals to the entire school and its students that “bullying is not tolerated” here.

Next, talk to your son and role play different situations, teaching him how to make eye contact and set his boundaries with anyone who he feels is invading his space in a hurtful manner. Boys are tribal and aggressive to a certain extent; this is their innate nature. Crossing over that line and becoming violent is something else all together.

Have the discussion with your son about being brave and sharing this information with you. Others will learn from this, and it will give the students another view of just how to handle uncomfortable things, and that teachers and parents really are there to help.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am in my late 40s and really want to go back to school. The problem I face is that I am too old and I feel that everyone will make fun of me. What do I do to stop thinking about that stuff and go anyway? Thank you for your advice.

— *Brenda in Los Angeles*

Dear Brenda: I have a question for you: If you think you are too old now, how old will you be if you don’t go back to school? If there is something you wish to do with your life that excites you, give yourself permission to explore it!

It’s a funny thing, we tend to worry more about what strangers and others will think about us than about the choices we make in life. What do you think about yourself is the real question. I say, “yes” go get ‘em. Talk to a school counselor, get a list of classes that you are interested in, sign up for one or two and take it from there.

There are so many amazing things in the world to explore and experience. It sounds like you are headed for some amazing times. Let yourself go, get started and hold on for the ride!

• • •

Imagine This ...

It’s better to fail in originality than succeed in imitation.

Success is going from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm.

There are no shortcuts to any place worth going.

Those who lack courage will always find a philosophy to justify it.

The superior man is distressed by his want (lack) of ability.

Some people take no mental exercise apart from jumping to conclusions.

Show me a sane man and I will cure him for you.

What the mind can conceive, the mind can achieve.

Water gratitude and see what grows.

Randi Rabin: I’ve Lost the Weight But Still Don’t Like How I Look? How can I kick my serious drug habit?

Published on 08.29.2013 4:51 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have been on a weight-loss program for more than two years now. I am almost at my dream numbers on the scale, but my body — oh my heavens — is sagging everywhere. What is the next step in feeling good now that I look better and don’t have to hide anymore? I still see a “BIG” person when I look in the mirror. Thanks.

— *Shelley in Atascadero*

Dear Shelley: Congratulations on your major achievement! It is really helpful while losing weight to balance that with a workout routine. Find a gym that is convenient and close to your home so you will go regularly.

Now that you have seen that strong and determined person inside of you, the next step is to introduce her to the person that needed to hide. They both have things they need to share with each other.

The third step is to learn from both of them, and continue to open up to the world and see what is next!

There may be emotional issues that need to be worked through so finding a professional to talk to would also be a good idea. Good luck.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I know that the new drug is so dangerous that it leaves nothing but darkness in its wake — the things that heroin has done to me and my family. We are dealing with this now, and it's tearing us apart.

How can we help our boy get back to the way he used to be: happy, healthy and a big part of our lives? He keeps making the wrong choices and going further and further into the darkest places, and we keep rescuing him and trying to pick up the pieces. What else can we do? Please give me some advice, and can you share with me a daily meditation for hope?

— *Kerrie B.*

Dear Kerrie: They say that heroin has no boundaries — neither does a parent's love! This is why most parents become enablers where addiction and their children are concerned.

Wanting to help your child is natural, thinking that you can take the addiction away is also natural and “not true.” You cannot fix this. No one is allowed in the addict's mind but him or her. The longer it takes for the parents to decide to stop rescuing, the more the disease advances. If you want to help your addict, you must live in the same world they do.

Pray for them, love them, know that this addiction screams so loud in our world today — and there is help. Sponsors, police officers, probation officers, counselors, recovering addicts and pastors are more helpful than parents. These are the faces that can be neutral and reach in where a parent can't.

There are groups around the country that will be very helpful for you. For support and guidance, contact [Time to Get Help by clicking here](#).

There is a gentle meditative invocation that will be helpful to you through this time of uncertainty — calmly repeat whenever necessary: “The wound is the place where the light enters you.” Hold this thought for your son, and carry this vision with you as you do your love for him each day. He will feel its positive power and so will you. Good luck to you and your family.

Imagine This ...

Today is the day that “good” gets in. Yes, just plain ole' good. Good thoughts, good feelings, good food, good company. You get the picture?!

Try 24 hours of nothing but good. Notice it, share it, spread it around and tell me how you feel in a day or two. My readers send me things that they need help with, and I really enjoy sharing tips and guidance because that's what I do. I also like to hear from those who are having “Their Best Day Ever!” So send me a tip or two of what makes your day a beauty and I'll pass it on. Thanks for sharing. Have a *good* one.

Randi Rabin: Fed Up with Fellow Mother's Know-It-All Attitude? Teen has difficulty adjusting to divorced parents, affecting schoolwork.

Published on 08.22.2013 6:33 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have several mommy friends in our small community, and we all share similar ideas around how to raise our children. However, there is one mother who upsets the apple cart every day, always telling us how to do this better and that better. “That's not how you should talk to your daughter when she is out of line.” She thinks she knows everything! I'm sick of it! Thank you for your advice.

— *Beth in Santa Barbara*

Dear Beth: Trying to get along with every single mother you meet on each issue of child rearing will be something that may leave you exhausted and a bit crazy! Take what feels right for you and your family, and toss the rest out with the bath water. Know that when you are keeping your children safe and loving them with good intentions you have the basics covered.

Perhaps you can find a parenting class in town that you like and invite your friend along. It could lead to new skills for both of you and maybe lessen her desire to be Miss Bossy Pants. If that fails, when she begins to lecture all of you mothers in the future, just smile and say, “Thank you so much for sharing.”

Dear Feelings Doctor: I need some help with my parents. I know they love me, I guess, but it isn't easy for me lately. They have been divorced for a few years now and I still feel sad a lot of the time. I go from one house to the other, and I don't like it. I am going into the 10th grade and it gets really hard to concentrate on my homework. Please talk with me so I can figure this out. Thanks.

— *Dylan in Santa Barbara*

Dear Dylan: When divorce happens to a family, it's so important to have someone to talk to about all the changes you are going through. There are school counselors available as well as fellow classmates you could confide in.

Over 50 percent of marriages in the United States have experienced what you are going through. I share this information with you to let you know you are not alone. Please know that your parents' decision to live apart has nothing to do with you.

Having a difficult time coping with your schoolwork as well as going from house to house is an example of what could be discussed with your parents. If there is a routine that you feel may work better for you while you are in school, have a conversation about that very thing with your mom and dad. It is really important for you to have some type of rhythm at each of your parents' homes. That will certainly help you with your focus and add another layer of comfort while you continue coping with all the changes.

Asking your parents to come together and work with you on this issue would be a tremendous help. I know you can ask for what you need, because you have done it successfully here with me! Good luck, young man. Continue on your journey of sharing who you are and what you are made of with the world.

Imagine This ...

Bringing Love

*Every block to love lies in your heart,
it is there that it must be dissolved.*

*Don't wait for heaven to come
to spread your love around.*

Do it now.

*For heaven is in your eyes
when you see with compassion.*

It is in your hands when you reach out to help.

*It is in your mind when you see
"good" instead of "evil."*

*How you see the world determines
what the world will be for you.*

*So do not seek to change other people
or the world around you.*

*Look instead only at yourself
and you will find the place*

where love begins.

— From *Everyday Wisdom* by [Paul Ferrini](#), Heartways Press

Randi Rabin: How Can I Calm the Emotional Extremes of Bipolar Disorder? Sleep disorder so boyfriend sleeps in another room.

Published on 08.15.2013 6:28 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have bipolar disorder, and I really would like some advice on how to calm myself without a lot of attention when things get tricky. Do you have any advice for me? Thanks so much. It's a tough time.

— *Steve in Thousand Oaks*

Dear Steve: Thank you for writing in, and your question is a really important one. A lot of people focus mainly on medication when discussing bipolar disorder. There are natural, organic things that you can do to help prevent the emotional extremes:

- » Take your meds. They will relieve symptoms without changing your personality.
- » Get seven to eight hours of sleep every night. Even an hour or two less can bring on a manic episode.
- » Recognize your triggers and enlist others to help you stay calm when these triggers are unavoidable.
- » Avoid ups and downs in your diet as well as your life. Don't drink caffeine (it's a stimulant) or alcohol (it's a depressant).
- » Get cognitive behavioral therapy. Your mind is powerful and it can be your biggest ally.
- » Enjoy yourself, get out and do things that make you happy. Find time to engage in pleasurable, relaxing activities.

Making these things part of your daily routine will help keep that balance in your life that you are looking for. Good luck.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have been sleeping in the guest room because my boyfriend says that I scream every night and thrash around in my sleep and he gets no rest! Is he serious? I would remember doing something like that, wouldn't I?

— *Sleeping Beauty in Hollywood*

Dear Sleeping Beauty: It is quite possible that you are experiencing “sleep terrors.”

The symptoms include panicky screams and disorganized behavior, and it is very difficult to wake the person, as they usually have no memory at all of these incidents. Talk to your doctor about this. He or she can recommend something to help you.

Next, rearrange your furniture in your bedroom so you can minimize the possibility of hurting yourself.

Also, find a good therapist and discuss possible triggers that may be adding to your situation. Take comfort in knowing that these episodes often decrease with age.

Imagine This ...

True leaders

are hardly known to their followers.

Next after them are the leaders the people know and admire;

after them, those they fear; after them, those they despise.

To give no trust

is to get no trust.

When the work's done right,

with no fuss or boasting,

ordinary people say,

Oh, we did it.

Randi Rabin: What's Behind Spouses' Constant Argument about Money? Relative being financially abused?

Published on 08.08.2013 6:48 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My husband and I argue constantly about money! We are a successful couple and really have nothing to worry about. Both of us have worked our way up to where we dreamed we would be one day, and now that we are here — it's still the same stress! What gives?

— *Karen in Paradise*

Dear Karen: Money is one of the most potent exchanges in the world, simply because it is tied to our survival. Sometimes the habits we set in motion to lead us to our dreams remain even after we have reached them. There is an importance in life with having your basic needs met, i.e. food, shelter and clothing, along with the health and happiness of your family.

Having all of those taken care of and you two still nag and argue, it sounds like you both have developed this pattern as a way of communicating. If the two of you have remained close and are now truly able to share your success, I have two words for you: stop it!

Dear Feelings Doctor: My son seems to be preoccupied with cleanliness. He washes his hands, actually scrubbing his hands at least 75 times a day! Our home is clean and we are an organized family, and it feels unnatural to have this go on. Please give me some advice on how to ease his anxiety over this.

— *Dana in Ventura*

Dear Dana: I am wondering how long this behavior has been present. It sounds like your son may be a little compulsive with cleanliness, although I do not like labels when all of the information is not present. Keep an eye on his routines, and if he continues to spend more and more time with this, talk to him about what may be causing his anxiety.

Shame and secrecy are often elements that add to this type of behavior, so please talk with him as much as possible. Learning to meditate would be a wonderful, organic way to reduce anxiety and relax his body.

Have your son start out in a quiet space and do some deep breathing for at least five to 10 minutes every day. There are other things that he may find helpful as well. This is a wonderful place to begin. Good luck.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have a strong suspicion that my Aunt Lilly is being abused financially. What should I do? Please help, as I have no idea where to begin. Thank you.

— *Paula in Ojai*

Dear Paula: The elderly are often a prime target for financial exploitation. Whether it is happening by a family member or a caretaker, if you suspect that your Aunt Lilly is being victimized and abused in this way, report it immediately.

This is especially important if you notice that your aunt is not being cared for properly by the person hired to do just that. This is a huge red flag. Talk to her family doctor or a close friend and get information now. Many states have toll-free numbers for this specific purpose. Good luck. Your aunt is lucky to have you in her corner.

Imagine This ...

Today is the day we experiment with “Savoring.” You will need two things:

» A source of genuine love ... joy, wholeness or any other flavor of positivity in your life.

» A willingness to think differently about something in your life that has been challenging you.

Truly cherish the opposite of each emotion in a positive way. Make room for the magic and build your portfolio of gratitude, serenity, hope, awe, amusement, inspiration and love.

Blessings. Let’s talk soon.

Randi Rabin: Is Going to a Gentleman’s Club Cheating on Your Mate? Sister in a coma, family in crisis?

Published on 08.01.2013 7:07 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have had this question on my mind for quite some time: Is going to a gentleman's club cheating on your mate? Please tell me your thoughts on this. Thanks.

— *Curious in Santa Barbara*

Dear Curious: There are opinions for both sides of this never-ending topic. Going to a gentleman’s club is a personal preference for those involved. Have this open discussion with your mate and find out the proper boundaries for the both of you.

There is an element of taboo that looms over this type of behavior, and perhaps that’s what makes it seem so exciting and a bit naughty. When we pass someone on the street, or see a nice-looking person in line in front of us at a coffee shop, our mind (sometimes) goes to places of fantasy. Being sexually excited is something that will occasionally happen!

Take that passionate energy home with you and share it with your mate. The arousal that comes from that organic place inside of us is something to welcome and celebrate. Knowing how to express it and with whom is another story. If you are in a monogamous relationship, this is a great time to share these sexy, steamy feelings with her or him and keep those fires at home really hot!

Dear Feelings Doctor: I fell in love with a married woman, as did she with me eight years ago. I told her if she left her husband we could be together. She left him, but she refuses to divorce him. Her reasons are: 1) his health insurance is better than mine; 2) the longer she stays with him the more money she will get from his retirement/palimony; and 3) it will hurt their grown kids. All I can think is: Will she do this to me? Mahalo.

— *Joyous Jeff, hoping not to be Sad-Guy-Jeff in Happy Canyon/Santa Ynez*

Dear Joyous Jeff: When one leaves their current mate for another, there will always be some type of unfinished business within — whether it is the fear of being alone, or the simple fact that they cannot express their true heartfelt wishes, or sometimes it really may be “true love.” Jumping out of the frying pan into the fire (as the saying goes) doesn’t leave much room for personal growth, though.

That said, I do believe there are many different ways to be in a relationship if those involved are willing to work at creating what they truly desire. It doesn’t have to be a typical version of anything. It can be the recipe that works for you, your partner and everyone else involved, providing it carries the elements of honesty, openness and integrity from all parties.

After eight years, something must still be working! Perhaps the idea of being in a relationship but not really being in on the day-to-day chores that make a house run smoothly allows the newness to remain. Still “quasi-dating” after all this time may be the answer to your longevity.

She has stated her reasons for staying where she is. What are yours, Joyous Jeff?

Dear Feelings Doctor: My sister is in a coma from a car wreck, and she has been unconscious for six weeks now. We don't know the extent of the trauma or her injuries yet. Our family is too sad, and I don't know what to do. Please help with anything that can make it easier. Thank you.

— *Me in Santa Barbara*

Dear Me: There is nothing more powerful than the human spirit, and nothing more important than tender loving care. It may be difficult for you to do during this time, but go as often as you can and read to your sister. Hold her hand, touch her and let her hear your voice. Share stories from your past that the two of you have laughed about over the years, and that you have plans for more adventures for the two of you.

There is an unspoken language that exists even when there is no movement noticed. There is always a reason for hope. Carry that light of love and hope with you. Let it shine brightly for you, your family and your sister.

Imagine This: I expand my vision to see unlimited possibilities.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

Randi Rabin: I'm Falling in Love with My Friend's Husband

Published on 07.25.2013 6:03 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I live in Montecito, a small family community in the Santa Barbara area. We have dinner parties monthly and know everyone in town. My problem: I think I am falling in love with my girlfriend's husband.

We see each other every week and again at parties, and I can't stop thinking about him. We have lunch a lot, and I know that something else is coming — and I want it to happen.

— *Help in Montecito*

Dear Help: You say that you have designs on your girlfriend's husband?! *Really, girl?* Go find someone else!

Even if he is the only one giving you the attention that you may need right now, there is such a thing as allegiance to sisterhood! There must be other trees to bark up somewhere else. Besides, this one has a night watchman!

Think this over long and hard, especially living in a small community. Things like this never end well, but they "do" always end.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I know that it may be impossible to keep everything dangerous from our children, but how can I do the best job for my family? My son recently saw another student at school carrying a knife — he is 14 years old!

— *Scared in Santa Barbara*

Dear Scared: Do you have candid, open, ongoing dialogue with your son? It is so important at this age of "teenager growth" for parents to have honest communication, especially with the Internet and all of the worldly access that alone brings to the family dynamic. Remember, this is your baby! The one you stayed up holding all night when his teeth came in. The one who needed you during the night when scary things in the closet came to life.

Stay with your children emotionally as well as physically so they know that when a challenge comes up you will be there to "listen" with both your ears *and* your heart. As far as a weapon at school, informing the principal about what happened as well as asking your son what he feels comfortable doing about it from his point of view would be good steps.

Empowering your son in this manner, discussing the importance of making solid, standup choices is a good beginning to his teenage experience.

Imagine This

Do not focus on what is missing
but on what is always there and cannot be taken away.

Do not focus on what is wrong or bad,
but on what is right and good.

Because you do not look for weaknesses,
you will help people find their strength.

Because you do not look for wounds,
you will help people find their gratitude.

Go have a magical day, and share it.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

Randi Rabin: How Do I Tell My Husband I Have an Eating Disorder?

Published on 07.18.2013 5:23 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have had trouble with an eating disorder for three years, and my husband found out yesterday about my throwing up after I eat. We are uncomfortable around each other now, and I don't know what to say. I can either lie to him or be truthful. I am not sure what to do.

— *Help Me in Hollywood*

Dear Help Me: Stop hiding! Take this opportunity to have a *real* conversation with your husband about what has been going on in your life. Discuss with him whatever emotional conflict you have been going through. This will help ease your burden. You do not have to go through this alone.

Be prepared to make small changes, and set goals that you can obtain. Enlist the help of a professional who you can put your trust in. Know that this does not have to continue being part of your life, and the more you share with others the less frightening it will seem.

The [National Eating Disorders Association](#) can guide you as well. The phone number is 800.931.2237.

I know you can do this. Good luck.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I know I shouldn't have, but I read my sister's diary. There are things written in there that my parents would be so upset about if they knew! What should I do? I am 17 and my little sister is almost 15.

— *Big Sister in Santa Barbara*

Dear Big Sis: Without knowing what was in your sister's diary, I can only tell you that at 15 she could be going through so many different emotions: school, friends, grades, stress and pressure with any number of things. If it is something life-threatening, go to your parents right away. If your sister gets mad at you, at least she will be alive to argue her side of the story.

Take the time to talk to her no matter what it is that you have knowledge of. Having parents you can go to for guidance or a school counselor would be extremely helpful.

Write me again if you feel comfortable sharing more information. We can work on this together. Your little sister watches everything you do and say, so setting examples of right behavior and safe choices will help her in the biggest way. Blessings to you both.

Dear Feelings Doctor: So I'm at Whole Foods at the seafood counter, and an older gentleman walks up to the employee who is behind the counter and starts yelling at him for not being more helpful the last time he was in there asking about seafood.

I felt sorry for the guy, but I really wanted to say something to the man yelling at him in public. Instead, I sat idly by and that made me feel like a coward. Of course, I didn't know both sides of the story, but come on! That's no way to behave in public.

What is the best way to diffuse situations like this in public without causing a confrontation? Thanks.

— *Empathy in Santa Barbara*

Dear Empathy:

With everything in life, a lot of situations have to do with personal preference. This is one of them.

When someone acts out in anger, the underlying emotion is generally sadness. This "older gentleman" may have things in his life that aren't working for him these days and would love someone to just notice him. As you mentioned, you felt like you wanted to make conversation with him; that would be a great idea. You could show him the special food that keeps bringing you back to Whole Foods, or something new that you have discovered while roaming the isles.

Haven't we all felt angry at times when we seem to be invisible?

By the way, you are not a coward. Everyone we randomly bump into is really there for a reason — random or not.

Imagine this: We tire of those pleasures we take, but never of those we give.

Randi Rabin: How Can I Overcome Being Scared to Death of Dying?

Published on 07.11.2013 5:42 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am scared of dying. I am even more scared of my beloved husband dying. Both of us are “older” (I am 50 and he is 60), but I don’t want to spend the rest of my life secretly freaking out about this.

— *Scared in Santa Barbara*

Dear Scared: Thanatophobia, the fear of death, is something that everyone feels in their own way at one time or another. Actually, a little bit of fear does keep us on the safe side, providing it doesn’t occupy our entire day.

If you and your husband have not had checkups lately, perhaps you should do so, then mark that worry off of your list. Your doctor can ease your mind and determine whether it is a symptom or an actual anxiety that you are dealing with.

The challenge is to focus on what you wish your life to be like and express yourself in that direction. When your fears of death and dying come up, simply be a witness to those feelings; do not let those thoughts run your life. Ask yourself, “What am I really afraid of?” “Could I be afraid of living?”

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have a wonderful sister. She is 4 years older than me, and I wish that we could have the type of relationship that we used to. She sits alone in her apartment reading all the time, goes to work, comes home and does the same thing all over again the next day.

I am having my 30th birthday next month and want her to be a part of my celebration. How can I make her enjoy me like I want to enjoy her? Thanks so much.

— *Sherry in San Francisco*

Dear Sherry: It has been said that you can pick your friends but you cannot pick your family. Whether you believe it or not, if your relationship with your sister is important to you, make an effort to reach out. Invite her to coffee first to open the door again for a new beginning. Focus on rebuilding your relationship, spending time reconnecting. If that goes well, make plans for lunch and continue your discovery of each other in a healthy, new way.

You mentioned that your sister enjoys reading; perhaps the two of you can start your own book club! We cannot force anyone to like us, that is something that will come naturally or not. It is such a sweet gesture. Hopefully she will be touched by your genuine desire to reconnect and extend her hand — and her heart — in your direction.

Sisters are one of the most magical gifts ever given. Blessings to you both.

Dear Feelings Doctor: It feels like a lifetime that I have been living with my girlfriend and not being open with my family about our love. Now that things have changed in our society, please help me with advice on how to share our love with my parents and siblings. Thank you so much.

— *April in Santa Barbara*

Dear April: To honor who we are in this world in hopes that everyone we love will be accepting of our choices may disappoint us sometimes. Nevertheless, we must be true to what and who we are. In doing so, we must understand that our loved ones and friends also need to be true to who and what they believe in. Sometimes those things take longer than other times to figure out.

One thing remains constant: The safety and happiness of a child is what a parent hopes and dreams of most of all. Here’s to everyone living happily ever after.

Imagine this ...

In This House

WE LAUGH ... A LOT

WE TRY OUR BEST

WE ARE PATIENT ...

most of the time

WE TELL THE TRUTH

WE SUPPORT EACH OTHER

WE HUG OFTEN

WE MAKE MISTAKES

WE NEVER GIVE UP

We always forgive

We keep our promises
WE ALWAYS HAVE FUN
But above all
... WE LOVE.

Randi Rabin: Help! What Happened to My 15-Year-Old 'Angel'?

Published on 07.05.2013 8:18 a.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My son is 15 years old and has always been an angel in the family. Suddenly I don't know him. He refuses to do anything to help around the house, and he's constantly complaining about everything. I am concerned he may be doing drugs. What can I do to communicate better, to get inside as his parent and not the enemy? Thank you.

— *Powerless in Arroyo Grande*

Dear Powerless: Thank you for sharing your story. At 15 years old, your teenager is changing with each breath. He will go to bed as one sweet, loving young angel, and wake up with horns some mornings.

Welcome to puberty! It isn't very pretty sometimes, but everyone will make it out alive!

As for what your son is doing with his friends at school, after school and on the weekends, have your finger on the pulse of his whereabouts. If he closes his bedroom door, go in through a window (metaphorically speaking). It is very important that he have rules, guidelines and boundaries at home and is encouraged to follow them. If possible, have family dinner at least three or four times a week, with your son setting the table or helping in the kitchen.

Each family member has his or her special energies to contribute that help the inner workings of your family exist. Point out the progress he is making and have those all-important talks about small things as well as drugs or anything else he is wondering about right now. This is the time his curiosity will be growing in a lot of different areas. Make sure you talk to him about your concerns and be ready to "listen" to what he shares with you.

The next time you have this talk it will be easier, and please know there should be an ongoing dialogue with your son about everything in his life right now.

Part of growing up as a teen is getting ready to push parents away in a natural progressive dance. Teens do not have the thought process just yet to separate from their parents with diplomacy. They really do need you to show them how it is done. Your *patience* is utterly important along with your love right now.

Remember: Just because they roll their eyes doesn't mean they close their ears.

Dear Feelings Doctor: Please answer this "age-old" question: Can men and women really be "just friends"? Thanks very much. I just need to know!

— *Craig in Santa Barbara*

Dear Craig: Well, my friend, it's a really great experience when it happens. It takes lots of work to get to that beautiful, blissful place, and worth every drop of effort one puts into it, for sure.

The bottom line is: Women go to women to share their thoughts and deep feelings. Well, guess what? So do men — they love having a woman friend they can go to in their time of crisis and share every tiny detail. Guys don't really share that kind of stuff with other guys. There really is "friendship attraction" once both parties get past the bumpy stage of "should we sleep together to see if it's great or just be friends?" part.

Remember, animalistic attraction is the first response that we humans notice, but society has a difficult time figuring out this whole male/female friendship thing. People seem to feel more comfortable when they know what column you go into. It makes everyone feel safer to know that you go into this box or that box.

Well, guess what? Fit into a box if you like, but actually, shhh — there really is no box.

Besides, being best friends with the opposite sex can be an illuminating, fulfilling experience.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My daughter is only 14 and pregnant. My husband and I are furious and at the same time wondering how to handle this situation. She wants to have the baby but refuses to say who the father is and, furthermore, says he is out of the picture. What do we do? We love her so much, and this is the *last* thing we could ever imagine happening to her — to all of us.

— *Parents in Santa Barbara*

Dear Parents: This is a very challenging time for your family. I understand the stress and thoughts that may be filling your days right now. What you choose to do as a family in supporting your daughter is so very important.

It is something that needs to be discussed together in a gentle, caring way, along with the options that are available to her. This is definitely one of the biggest decisions of her life. Having her talk to others, talk to a counselor, talk to girls who have gone through this experience, and support, support, support your daughter as much as possible.

Whatever she chooses, having educated information will help her greatly. It is a huge decision and a lot to process for a 14-year-old girl. Know that the strength and love of your family will carry everyone through this important time. Blessings to you all.

Randi Rabin: After Nine Years, How Can a Shy Guy Start Dating Again?

Published on 06.27.2013 5:19 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I've been reading your column, and your advice to the man who has had several lovers was good for him, but I have not been with a woman in nine years. I am kind of shy and really find it difficult to approach anyone. I have my good family and friends for years who I trust, but no one else. How can I try to start again? Thank you.

— *Stan in Santa Barbara*

Dear Stan: By writing me and sharing your desires, you are ready now to begin the next chapter of your life. Bravo! Here we go ...

Where have you been spending most of your down time? What types of hobbies and sports do you enjoy? Start with baby steps in those directions, doing things that make you happy and taking risks with those who show up around you. Make conversation with people in line at the store or coffee shop. By putting yourself out there a little each day, you will feel more confident.

Mention you are ready to begin dating now to your close friends and see if they have anyone in mind. You trust your family and friends, now begin trusting yourself. Good luck, and have fun!

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am newly sober and have been working a program now for four months. I really want to get the healthy part of my life back, which includes my friends, and remember the good, fun times again. Help, please. Your suggestions are greatly appreciated.

— *Kathy in Santa Barbara*

Dear Kathy: Congratulations on your four months! Second: Find a program, a sponsor and support group right away if you haven't already. As you seek an emotionally healthy, sober life, your relationships with friends and family will change. It is time for you to make new friends who have the same goals that you do right now — working a program and staying sober, exercising and taking better care of yourself in different ways than you have before.

It sounds like a broken record, but it is so very true — one drink is too many and a hundred is not enough! Letting your old friends know that you are making important changes in your life right now, and that their support is appreciated, will also be a blessing for you.

But no matter what, each day is the beginning of that new start that you have chosen. Keep reaching for your goals — one day at a time with the vision of that bright future that you can see ahead.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am trying with all of my might to stop smoking! It's a b****! I get crabby, and the people in my office are thinking I am losing it. Please, can you help me? Thank you in advance. Please answer as soon as possible. P.S. I really liked your column today.

— *Stacey in Ventura*

Dear Stacey: Way to go! What a huge gift you are giving yourself! The addiction of nicotine is as powerful and habitual as heroin. It is, however, possible to stop smoking with all of the help that is available these days.

Check with your doctor to decide which of the avenues is right for you. There are patches, sprays, gums and shots that you can try, along with behavioral modification. First begin with your routine each day: Switch it up from the minute you wake up until the moment you lay your head down on the pillow at night. The rituals that you have had as a smoker will need to be changed immediately. When you go out to dinner, sit in the nonsmoking section. Tell everyone you meet that you have stopped smoking, enlisting the support from others will be a big help.

Begin an exercise routine if you do not already have one. The more you stay active, the less time you will have to notice that automatic “reach” for your cigarettes. Join a support group either online or locally for nonsmokers.

The first three to five days will be the most difficult, but your symptoms will be tolerable and more manageable as time goes by. Keeping your hands occupied and your mouth busy is a goal right away. It may sound a bit crazy, but sunflower seeds are actually one of the best things to have around. It keeps your mouth and your hands busy while eating something healthy as well.

I have given you several suggestions, but I’m sure there are a few that will work for you right away. If you slip up, don’t give up! Start over again. Please keep in touch. You have support right here.

Randi Rabin: Telling a Friend You Saw Her Husband with Another Woman

Published on 06.20.2013 5:23 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: How do I tell my friend that I saw her husband with another woman? It doesn’t seem like it was the first time — they were very touchy-feely!

— *Torn in Ventura*

Dear Torn: First of all, a woman usually knows long before anyone else thinks of telling her about it. And when you say friend, being the bearer of bad news is not an enviable position to be in. There are many different ways that couples make their relationships work for them, and having intimate knowledge of another person’s marriage cannot tell you the whole truth.

No one really knows the inner workings and dynamics of your average married couple. So, if I were you, I would invite your friend to lunch and have some laughs, go home, hug your mate and count your blessings.

Dear Feelings Doctor: There is a woman in our social group “always” saying things that are hurtful and unkind to the others. No one is brave enough to say anything to her. Never thinking about others’ feelings, she is a mean person! Please give me some tips to handle this nastiness when it happens again. Thank you.

— *Concerned in Carpinteria*

Dear Concerned: As adults, sometimes we forget the simple rules from childhood: Always be kind, and if you don’t have anything nice to say, be vague!

Seriously, if this woman is in your social group, and I am assuming that your social group is supposed to be doing fun things, stop inviting her! Next, have this conversation with her that you and I are having now. Begin with, “This is a bit uncomfortable for me, but I need to share it with you all the same.” Grown-up bullies should be less tolerated than the 12-year-old ones, but in my opinion, neither one should be tolerated. Good luck. You can do it.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am moving away in a few months, and I am sad and scared to face my friends who have been working with me for the past eight years. I am thinking about leaving without telling anyone. Is that the best thing to do? Please, some advice would be great.

— *Lee in Los Angeles*

Dear Lee: What a gift you have right in front of you, dear friend — the chance to say and experience a “healthy” goodbye. People do turn and run when things get uncomfortable, but I promise you this will be such a great moment that you can share with everyone involved, including yourself.

Celebrate the friendships that have developed over these past eight years, tell your colleagues what this part of your life has meant to you and celebrate your willingness to experience this profound blessing — real, true emotional gratitude!

Imagine this: Sell your cleverness and buy bewilderment.

Randi Rabin: Advice on Staying Fit at Age 60

Published on 06.13.2013 5:38 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I just turned 60, and I am wondering how to stay fit and exercise in a way that won't hurt me. Thank you.

— *Kathy in Santa Barbara*

Dear Kathy: There are several fun things that will keep you moving safely that are less strenuous than other exercise routines. As long as you have no major injuries, you should be fine. Please check with your doctor and get the go-ahead just to be sure.

Walking daily is actually just as beneficial as jogging and more enjoyable for those who want to see the sights and smell the roses along the way. Light weightlifting to maintain some muscle mass is also a good idea, and will keep your core strong and aligned as things change. Dancing, biking and warm yoga classes are also low-impact workouts that may be to your liking. Begin with a trainer to make sure you are doing all the movements and exercises properly; good form will last forever. And have fun!

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am a new mom, and my husband and I seem to be on totally different pages. I cannot do all the new things I need to do without his help. We seem to be arguing more now that our angel is here. It feels wrong when we should be happier than ever. Please help us.

— *Sara in San Francisco*

Dear Sara: You are not alone here. The new angel in your family will add so much pleasure and at the same time change everything completely. Your role as a spouse is still in place, in addition to being the primary caretaker for your baby. You will soon become the world's greatest juggler! Breathe, take walks with your husband when you can, and make sure you schedule date night for a few hours every week to check in with each other.

It is typical to have added stress and conflict now, but the best thing each of you can do for your new addition is to love and honor your mate. This will quiet the anxious energy in your home and make the impossible (such as brushing your teeth and showering) possible.

Roughly 70 percent of new parents experience conflict the first year. It's a new dance for everyone, but there is help. I suggest *And Baby Makes Three*. Good luck with your fabulous, new adventure.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am an intelligent, educated woman, and I find myself turning off the news, radio, everything and wanting to hide some days. I know that I cannot bury my head in the sand. I feel trapped and depressed by all the BS that is plastered on every screen all the time. Help!

— *Cindie in Ojai*

Dear Cindie: Staying positive when bad news is everywhere is a challenge that most people deal with. My advice is to keep your pulse on the day for seven to 10 minutes at the most. Then turn off the details that can stress you out and let joy take over. Taking this day right now and making the best of it, and then tomorrow, and then the next day, will keep you on a path of faith and freedom of the fear that can jump in and grab you.

We are certainly being tested every day. Choose peace and share it with everyone you meet today. When you decide to learn through joy, that's when life gets interesting!

Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.

Randi Rabin: How Can I Keep My Nephew from Experimenting with Drugs?

Published on 06.06.2013 3:53 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My 14-year-old nephew has expressed interest in experimenting with drugs. His parents work all day long, and he spends too much time unsupervised. How do I help him and also be there for my sister? Thank you.

— *Sharon in Ventura*

Dear Sharon: It happens earlier with each generation these days, teens beginning to experiment with certain things that can really change the course of their lives. Family time is such a crucial part of the foundation a teen needs to stay connected, especially going through the peer pressure they have to navigate — it's daunting!

There is a wonderful [Boys & Girls Club in Ventura](#). It's a great place for kids to go after school. There are counselors and guides on staff to help students with whatever is needed. Another suggestion is, whenever possible, have weekly family dinners to discuss the day's events. This helps keep the parents and teens on the same page regarding homework, sports and other issues that may be looming.

There is a video that I highly recommend, *Which Brain Do You Want?* by [Daniel Amen M.D.](#) It's all about this specific issue that you are concerned with. I salute you for being there for everyone, especially your nephew. A concerned auntie is always an important sounding block.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My daughter is in her last year at junior high. She is preoccupied with clothes and fitting in, and how certain girls make fun of her. How do I guide her with this shallow part of going through her teenage time? Thank you.

— *Nanette in Santa Barbara*

Dear Nanette: The truth is: It is shallow, it is hurtful and it is happening — in every junior high and high school across the country. If she has the desire to wear what the other girls are wearing, take her shopping and share this experience with her. Help her find her style. The goal right now for your daughter is being comfortable with who she is (that takes time) so help her in developing a strong self-esteem.

Hair, clothes, fitting in — they are all part of the package for teenagers. Eight hours a day, five days each week at school is a lot of time trying to ignore uncomfortable feelings. Listen to her and what she likes. When you help her achieve her goals and develop her self-image, go celebrate and take a picture of the big, beautiful smile she will be wearing, along with her new outfits!

When we can help our children with the tools and skills to solve their dilemma now, the future will be brighter for everyone.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am 54 years old, single with a great career. My secret is killing me. I am an alcoholic; I have been hiding it from everyone for 12 years and I can no longer do it. Any advice would be appreciated. Thank you for your time and help.

— *James in Montecito*

Dear James: Your brave honesty is exactly what you need in your life right now. If you have been trying on your own, it's time to seek assistance and support from professionals who can help you. Untreated, as you know, addiction will climb into every corner of your life and stay there unless "action" is taken. There are several facilities in town; a few that I can recommend have professional staff and doctors on the premises to assist you with this type of need. Please know that you are not alone and begin today to reach out as you have here. There are others who have been where you are, and I know they would be honored to walk with you through this rough time in your life to get to the other side.

Begin today, and take that first step.

Got a question for The Feelings Doctor? [Click here to submit a question](#) anonymously.

Randi Rabin: How Can I Lift Injured Daughter's Spirits?

Published on 05.30.2013 7:16 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have a wonderful daughter who plays every sport on the planet. She has been injured and off her volleyball team now for six months.

With surgery behind her and now physical therapy every other day, I see her slipping into a sadness that is deep and it makes me worry. Please give me some tips on how to lift her spirits and help her to remember how awesome she is. Thank you.

L.T. in Bakersfield

Dear L.T.: When an athlete is injured, there will be a period of mourning that is completely natural, and the psychological pain caused by the injury can be devastating. Unless treated, the overall recovery will be slow and incomplete. The mental anguish will lessen when there is a support group (coaches, parents, friends) who are sensitive to the injured athlete. Set new goals, and try to maintain a positive attitude, no matter what. Seek out support from teammates, and fight the urge to isolate. When it is time, go to the practices, offer to help in any way you can to stay close to your team and in the loop of what's going on. All your hard work will pay off ...

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have been divorced for 4½ years and I'm beginning to date again. I have two children, 10 and 7. What do I tell them and how do I actually go about bringing someone else into the picture? I met a guy who I am interested in and I really need help with this whole thing. Thanks.

Karen in Goleta

Dear Karen: How much distance do you place between your children and a newly developing relationship? The first rule is “Go slowly.” Let your children know you are beginning to date, and if it gets serious they will meet the person. Make sure that your home doesn’t become a revolving door for every man that you find interesting!

Trust yourself that you will know when the time is right. You need to feel that the man you choose will fit in with your family. There are a lot of variables, and not all of them are as challenging as you may think. Having to share you with another person won’t be easy; children always hold on to the idea that their parents will reunite. This is also an opportunity for your children to see happier parents, others who care about them, and positive role models for happy adult relationships.

Good luck with your new, exciting adventure ...

Dear Feelings Doctor: I witnessed someone shoplifting the other day. Should I have done something about it? I couldn’t tell whether the person had food in his pants or something else. He may have been hungry. Your advice please ...

— *Janice in Camarillo*

Dear Janice: Sometimes we just want to turn a blind eye to things that are uncomfortable for us. As human beings we do things for two reasons: to avoid pain or to seek pleasure. In this case, this person may have been doing what he needed to survive and feed his family, or simply taking because he could.

Stealing is stealing by all accounts. If you feel the need, get involved in whatever way feels right for you. Either by informing the store owner of what you witnessed, or by saying something to the effect of “Do you need some help with that?” Just to let the person know what you saw. It really is a personal choice, for everyone involved.

Do what you feel is right for you ...

Imagine This ...

“??I tried to teach my child with books.

?He gave me only puzzled looks.??

I tried to teach my child with words.?

They passed him by often unheard.

?Despairingly, I turned aside.

?“How shall I teach this child?” I cried.??

Into my hand he put the key

?“Come,” he said, “play with me.”?

Take the time to daydream with your children, the memories will last forever.

Randi Rabin: Searching for the Woman of My Dreams **— Again**

Published on 05.23.2013 7:22 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am a 65-year-old single guy in great shape with a passion for living a fun, happy life. I am searching for the woman of my dreams — again. Is there something else I should be doing instead of going to nightclubs to meet my Princess Charming? Thanks.

— *Ron, Santa Monica*

Dear Ron: It sounds like you really know how to enjoy things in life that bring you happiness. While going to nightclubs and bars can be fun sometimes, try shaking it up in a different direction with a yoga class or meditation retreat. How about a coed cooking class, or a mixed hiking or biking club? It may sound a bit tame for you at first, so be patient with yourself, settle in and “see what’s inside” for you next. Princess Charming could be right around the corner.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My wife and I are getting divorced. We have four teenage children. My wife left for an adulterous relationship. I am wondering how much I should disclose to the children about what went on. Thanks.

— *Wondering, Washington, D.C.*

Dear Wondering: Divorce is a heavy ordeal to go through for everyone, even teenagers. Ask yourself what information you feel will help you and your children get through this time with as much love and understanding as possible. The things that you and your wife are going through, only the two of you can

truly relate to, and perhaps certain details should remain private. Putting children in the middle is a rough place to be, no matter what age.

You two will forever share the greatest gifts together: your four children. Finding a way to continue to celebrate those lasting treasures will make everyone's life more beautiful. Good luck and blessings to you all.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My husband and I have busy lives with two young children. I try to raise them the best that I can while he is working all day. We argue in front of them too much, and he talks down to me where they can hear everything — telling me that I am a bad mother, making me feel unimportant. I do feel like a bad mother. What can I do?

— *Melinda, Ventura*

Dear Melinda: When the elephants fight, the grass suffers — your children are the grass. Being mindful of our words is so important when little ears are around. Having disagreements is a normal part of any relationship, but this sounds like more than that. Poor listening is the cause of communication breakdowns in every area of life. For your family's sake, focus on getting help with some tools for communicating in a less hostile way immediately. There are several books available on how to talk so people will listen, and how to listen so people will talk. Keep in touch with me and let me know how things progress.

• • •

OK, here's the deal. I have a challenge for all of us! This is the chance for you to share, give, send, write or perform your very own random act of kindness. I challenge you to "step up and step out!" Make someone feel honored and special today, this week or this month. Believe it or not, the tiniest gesture can make the biggest impact on another person. It also creates new, healthy habits for those who do it. So, go spread some kindness, and let me know how you feel about it. Yes you, yes now.

Bliss and blessings ...

Randi Rabin: How to Respond When a Parent Is Abusive to a Child in Public

Published on 05.17.2013 1:38 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I was at the grocery store yesterday and a mother was being abusive to her young child to such an extreme it made me very upset! I didn't know what to do in this situation. When I got home I couldn't stop thinking about it. Give me some advice on this, please.

— *Cece, Marina Del Rey*

Dear Cece: It is a tricky situation to know when to step in and when to call 9-1-1.

If the parent is at their wits' end, offer to take the child for a stroll around a few aisles while they finish their grocery list; that would be great. Add, "It looks like you're having a rough day." If on the other hand the parent is physically hurting the child, you have the right to take action and call 9-1-1. Your positive attention to the child will perhaps plant a seed of patience for the next time. Well done.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My husband and I have been going through a really rough time lately, and he promised he would never threaten to leave. We have a young daughter and lately he has been saying we should just end it right now. What do I do, and how do I go on with my day?

— *Carla, Los Angeles*

Dear Carla: Relationships are complicated to begin with, and adding uncertainty on a daily basis increases the insecurity you may be feeling, in addition to the energy in the home your daughter can sense from her parents.

Find a time when the two of you are not arguing to bring up the things that you are feeling about the situation, how it disturbs your day when the two of you aren't getting along. Perhaps your husband was brought up in a family where arguing was not allowed. You need to ask, are the two of you in this relationship with both feet or not? If so, seek out help and guidance.

Threatening to leave needs to be a forbidden place to go. Discussing feelings around the issues that show up for the two of you is the best thing to do. Good luck to you both.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I have a great life with lots of things and people around me. I am extremely lonely and feel like I have no right to complain. What is going on, and how do I get past this? Thank you for helping me. I have read your column, and I really appreciate the care you take with your answers.

— *Sandi, Minneapolis*

Dear Sandi: You have mentioned the material things that you have around you. Please share with me the possessions in your spirit that shine for you, the moments in your day that make your heart dance! Things and “stuff” are really nice to have and fun to share, but they cannot take the place of your mission here — they only add to it.

What is that secret something that you have been longing to do? The time is now, Sandi. Go do it! Bliss and blessings ...

Randi Rabin: Decades Later, the Effects of Complex Trauma Still Linger

Published on 05.09.2013 7:06 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I’m a 55-year-old woman who has been diagnosed with clinical depression, anxiety and OCD. I’ve been in and out of “talk” therapy since my 20s. I’ve been on a whole slew of psychiatric medications (under the supervision of various psychiatrists) since my mid-30s. Despite all of this, I am still unable to live fully, happily or productively.

Through my ongoing research, I’ve recently become more aware of the incredible impact of complex trauma (untreated) on children — now adults. I suffered physical, emotional and mental abuse, as well as physical neglect and removal from the family home due to the dangerous situation. I’m looking for therapists or organizations that treat this broad spectrum of issues specifically (and inexpensively; I’m on disability).

— *Me, Santa Barbara*

Dear Me: What a survivor you are! First of all, be sure that you have the proper medical people around you, and second, I am wondering if you have any physical activity that you can do. One of the best things for depression is movement. If you can, begin walking a block or two each day, gradually increasing it to what feels right for you.

You are not only a survivor, you can become a thriver with a positive attitude and your strong will. I am sure things will be looking brighter very soon. You can also contact the [Center for Successful Aging in Santa Barbara by clicking here](#) for peer counseling immediately. The phone number is 805.963.8080. It is a nonprofit organization with trained counselors on staff. It also has specific ongoing weekly discussion groups.

“Begin telling your story from a place of empowerment.” Good luck to you.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My partner is a wonderful person, but he is constantly telling me what to do, as if I don’t have a mind of my own. His intentions are sincere, but it’s just starting to get on my nerves! Any suggestions on how to handle this?

— *Frayed Nerves, San Luis Obispo*

Dear Frayed Nerves: Next time you are in the middle of him making you feel uneasy, stop the conversation and begin:

Start by asking him if he has a moment for a conversation about something that is very important to you. Once you have his attention, begin by saying, “You may think that this is about you, but it’s actually about me. I really feel uneasy when I am spoken to like that, so please understand that if I ask you to stop — it’s because it’s something that is very bothersome to me. I really appreciate your understanding, and will let you know when it happens again. Thanks for being such a good listener. Now, where should we go for lunch?”

You may need to repeat, repeat, repeat this phrase several times until the new pattern is in place.

Dear Feelings Doctor: My wife has been going through the “change of life” since she turned 50 — that was three years ago. We are great friends and share a passion for life, but the passion for each other has been withering. Every time I bring it up she gets offensive. What do I do? I love our friendship but miss the intimacy.

— *Greener Pastures, Ventura*

Dear Greener Pastures: The truth of the matter is, there really are no “greener pastures”! All grass is just green if you look close enough. When women go through the change of life, it happens to their mate as well. Hormones colliding can be a challenging time for everyone.

As far as intimacy, this is the time in your life to really be creative. Women respond to good ol’-fashioned courting, and most of them always will. So, make friends with the local flower shop, ask her to dance with you, and remind her often what it was about her that captivated you all those years ago. Sounds to me like you two have a wonderful richness in your friendship that only happens with deep connection. How lucky for the both of you! Go get ‘em, Tiger.

Imagine this ...

For all you emotional hoarders out there, it’s time for some spring cleaning.

Yes, I know, the vernal equinox was March 20, but it’s never too early or late to begin with some fresh, fun habits. That’s right, those negative thoughts or fears that have been occupying your mind for a bit too long, and make you feel tight in your body. Let go and recycle some fresh, positive energy into what makes you smine — yes, smine: smile and shine. Mix this new attitude with some fresh, deep breaths and tell me how you feel in a few days.

Just look at all that wide-open space filled with new possibilities.

Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.

Randi Rabin: Dealing with the Declining Health of an Aging Parent

Published on 05.02.2013 6:54 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am 58 years old with a wonderful wife and two sweet teenage children. Both of my parents live nearby and we see them when we can. My father is in his 90s and slowing down a lot. The question I have is, how do I deal with the decline of my father’s health without showing him how frightened I am of losing him? My mother takes care of him day in and day out, and she is tired and scared, too.

— *A.P.*

Dear “Aging Parents”: How lucky you are to have your father close by for so many years, wow!

Visiting as much as possible, listening to those stories that you’ve heard 200 times, and sharing those positive feelings that you and your parents have developed will enrich and enhance that lifelong bond. There will be changes that occur naturally with an aging parent, so involve your father in decisions that concern him. Change is anxiety producing, but not being involved creates even more anxiety. Even the very frail need to maintain some control over their lives. A person who is railroaded into a new situation usually makes a poor adjustment.

Help to continue the kind and tender moments that will last for generations to come. We are who we are because of the love and kindness that we received from our parents, so in this case, “Paybacks are Heaven sent.”

— *F.D.*

Dear Feelings Doctor: My daughter, who is 16, went to a party where there was drinking last week. I just found out about it, and I am so angry. She said her friend’s father was fine with it. What do I do?

— *Square Dad*

Dear Square Dad: First of all, it is such a dangerous situation for anyone to allow underage drinking to take place in their home. That said, it happens all the time. The consequences are high, and the aftermath can be life-changing. So, have a candid conversation with your teens.

Let your teenagers know if they feel unsafe, uncertain or uncomfortable that they have permission to call you anytime, day or night. Your main concern is their safety. The “talk” comes after they are home, safe and sound.

The longer a young person waits to try alcoholic substances, the less likely they are to develop a desire for it, and the easier it is to say no — no is the new cool.

— *F.D.*

Dear Feelings Doctor: As I am entering into my 60s, soon I wonder who I shall become now. Is who I have become enough — for me, for my loved ones? I know it is all a journey, and mine is not finished yet. But still I can’t help but feel like I should be doing more. Is this a normal feeling as we age, or is my spirit trying to tell me something?

— *D., Carthage, Mo.*

Dear D.: Congratulations on asking such grand questions for your life, and for turning “60.” What is it that you feel you should be doing more of? Do it now with all the passion in your soul. And yes, my friend, spirit is always speaking to us. Bravo to you for listening.

— *F.D.*

Randi Rabin: Why Do My Friends Seem Heartless After My Divorce?

Published on 04.25.2013 10:24 p.m.

Dear Feelings Doctor: I am 58 years old with a wonderful wife and two sweet teenage children. Both of my parents live nearby and we see them when we can. My father is in his 90s and slowing down a lot. The question I have is, how do I deal with the decline of my father’s health without showing him how frightened I am of losing him? My mother takes care of him day in and day out, and she is tired and scared, too.

— *A.P.*

Dear “Aging Parents”: How lucky you are to have your father close by for so many years, wow! Visiting as much as possible, listening to those stories that you’ve heard 200 times, and sharing those positive feelings that you and your parents have developed will enrich and enhance that lifelong bond. There will be changes that occur naturally with an aging parent, so involve your father in decisions that concern him. Change is anxiety producing, but not being involved creates even more anxiety. Even the very frail need to maintain some control over their lives. A person who is railroaded into a new situation usually makes a poor adjustment.

Help to continue the kind and tender moments that will last for generations to come. We are who we are because of the love and kindness that we received from our parents, so in this case, “Paybacks are Heaven sent.”

— *F.D.*

Dear Feelings Doctor: My daughter, who is 16, went to a party where there was drinking last week. I just found out about it, and I am so angry. She said her friend’s father was fine with it. What do I do?

— *Square Dad*

Dear Square Dad: First of all, it is such a dangerous situation for anyone to allow underage drinking to take place in their home. That said, it happens all the time. The consequences are high, and the aftermath can be life-changing. So, have a candid conversation with your teens.

Let your teenagers know if they feel unsafe, uncertain or uncomfortable that they have permission to call you anytime, day or night. Your main concern is their safety. The “talk” comes after they are home, safe and sound.

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