

Shyness is bond for moms, girls

DEAR ABBY: I have questions about "growing up." I am 15 and want to talk to my mom about it, but I'm embarrassed. We talk about some stuff, but most of the time I wait until I can't stand it anymore and finally talk to her.

Do you have any ideas about making it easier for me to open up to my mom? I want to just walk through the front door and say, "Hey, Mom, I've got a question" — but I can't. I'm too shy. Abby, please help!

— TOO SHY IN A SMALL TOWN

DEAR TOO SHY: I'm sad to say your question is very common. It is repeated in nearly every batch of mail I receive. Teenage girls want to talk to their mothers, but they are afraid to reach out.

What I recommend are scheduled mother-daughter dinners, one-on-one time where there are no distractions, and feelings can be discussed, questions answered and opinions and attitudes aired and explained. This quality time can be the basis of precious memories and the foundation for trust and closeness. If this seems far-fetched, consider how many thousands of young girls have such distant relationships with their mothers that the only person they feel they can confide in is an advice columnist. Mothers, please reach out to your daughters. You'll be glad you did.

DEAR ABBY: My children attend a local elementary school here in Dallas. They are in kindergarten and second grade.

Other parents have told me about a practice that occurs in third grade at our school. If a child's desk is not properly organized (to the teacher's specifications), the teacher does a "desk dump" in front of the class and orders the child to put the items back using the "proper organization."

I don't think public humiliation is an appropriate teaching technique. And I seriously doubt that the children learn anything more than fear of their teacher.

Fortunately, the school district does not allow corporal punishment; however, this kind of emotional abuse can be almost as destructive as physical abuse for chil-



Abigail Van Buren

• Dear Abby

dren this young.

What do you think of this "teaching technique"?

— WORRIED PARENT IN TEXAS

DEAR WORRIED: I think it is unacceptable, outmoded and should be scrapped. Instead of teaching children, it demeans them and causes resentment.

Since you feel strongly about it, visit the principal and confirm that the stories are true. If they are, ask that the teacher be instructed about what is appropriate and effective and what is not. If the teacher persists, you and other concerned parents should take this matter up with the school board.

DEAR ABBY: I am 7 years old. I live with my mother and father in a small apartment. I have two fish, two cats, a hamster and a mouse — but I would also like a dog. My mother says our apartment is too small. My dad says to ask you because I practice reading through your column. Plus, I told my dad that I would ask your advice. Thank you.

— AMBER IN CHICAGO

DEAR AMBER: At the risk of getting myself in the doghouse, I vote with your mother. Two fish, two cats, a hamster and a mouse are already quite a sizable menagerie for a family of three living in a small apartment. Enough is enough.

I'm pleased that you read my column — it's never too early to start.

DEAR ABBY: I am 22. My fiancée, "David," is 23. We are both busy with our internships, working and finishing our degrees. David and his older brother still live at home, but now that we are planning a wedding and preparing our apartment, he sometimes spends the evening with me — having dinner, planning, doing homework, etc. Occasionally he stays over. This has caused his mother, "Vonda," to

freak out.

Vonda says she's not used to him being away from home. (My apartment is only a mile away.) She makes a big fuss about him not eating dinner with them or not calling to let her know his plans. She constantly tries to make us feel guilty about not spending more time with them. But at 23, neither David nor I think her requests are appropriate.

Two days ago Vonda e-mailed my parents and accused them of allowing me to do whatever I want. It's ridiculous, because I have lived on my own for three years and my parents have no part in this. It's almost like she doesn't take us seriously and that's why we're being treated like children.

The next few months are supposed to be for us to plan our wedding. I don't want to have to deal with this. I don't even want to be in the presence of David's parents now because of their lack of respect and civility. Must I tolerate his mother's behavior? Am I compelled to spend time in his parents' house?

— TURNED OFF IN TOLEDO

DEAR TURNED OFF: David's mother appears to be suffering from acute separation anxiety. Both of her adult sons still live under her roof and eat at her table. She looks at you — an independent woman — and sees a worldly rival "who's allowed to do whatever she wants," stealing her boy away.

David is long overdue for a serious talk with his parents. While, in a sense, he will always be "their little boy," he is a man now and will soon be striking out on his own. However, if he's not going to be home for dinner and plans to stay the night at your place, it would be considerate of him to let his parents know so they won't be concerned.

Must you tolerate Vonda's behavior? Yes, for the time being. Are you compelled to spend time with your future in-laws? You will if you're as smart as I think you are. There's much to be gained from strong family ties, if it's possible to maintain them. I have a hunch Vonda feels very isolated right now. A step in the right direction would be for you to ask her for some input on those wedding plans.

Report on Education

We must demand excellence from legislators as well as from students

Tomorrow morning more than half a million Kansas students will walk through the doors of our schools and universities. Will we be ready to meet their unique needs and prepare them for their futures?

All of these students must learn and experience new ideas and information in a way that helps them grow to their highest academic potential. Despite their differences, they also have much in common.

Visiting the classroom of first grader Ben will allow you to see students learning to read. However, Ben is not using the simple primers of the past. He is preparing to read both literature and technical materials. Because of Ben's technical reading skills, he will never struggle to set the clock on his video recorder, nor will the rapid pace of technological change ever set him back. Technical reading will be a commonplace requirement for the citizens of tomorrow. As a first grader Ben already has more computer experience than many adults in his community, and he is eager to do more to expand his reading experiences.

Sixth grader Luisa, who speaks and reads two languages, is a talented student off to an excellent start for a twelve year-old. She already has more language study in her short years than most Kansas adults will ever be able to complete. Luisa will be prepared for the diversity of the Kansas population of 2020. She will be ready to lead in the global business and trade environment in which our state must compete. Her understanding of other languages and cultures will make her a business leader in the Kansas of tomorrow.

If you follow high school senior LaKeesha through just one academic day, the pace will leave you exhausted and amazed. This talented student not only carries a full load of advanced classes but also has a special cell biology project she is researching with her teacher. An honor student, she manages this research around a full complement of activities including sports and the fine arts. The strong science background she has experienced since

elementary school has made her eager to advance biotechnology in Kansas.

LaKeesha wants to continue her education in Kansas but needs a university with outstanding science laboratory facilities.

Our Kansas classrooms are filled with thousands of students like Ben, Luisa and LaKeesha. They need a strong educational system to prepare them for the future — for our future. They need elected policymakers who understand the need to support our students and schools. They need elected policymakers who won't deprive them of an educational system worthy of the state of Kansas.

We must demand that our legislature address:

- Unstable funding that has not kept up with rising costs and inflation for nearly 10 years.
 - Inadequate funding that has allowed class sizes to increase for our most at-risk students.
 - The lack of resources to meet the needs of all students and address the growing demands for technology.
 - Kansas teacher salaries that have dropped to 41st in the nation making it difficult to attract and retain quality teachers.
 - The lack of adequate and affordable health care for all educational employees.
- By investing in our schools today, the legislature will ensure a healthy economic future for Kansas. The vitality and strength of our state is at risk if they fail to act. Our legislators are accountable and responsible for our future.

Many elected officials talk about how hard these decisions will be, and how the time is not right. But the children who walked through those doors this morning have only one chance to get an education, and we cannot afford to let that chance slip away.

For students like Ben, Luisa and LaKeesha, the time to act is now.



Christy Levings, an elementary classroom teacher in Olathe, is the elected President of the 25,000 teaching, support and retired staff members of the Kansas National Education Association. kneanews@knea.org

Investing in our schools today will ensure a healthy economic future for Kansas.

Kansas National Education Association




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