

# Woman concerned about brother-in-law



**Abigail Van Buren**

• Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: Last night I saw my brother-in-law hit my 1-year-old niece. It was horrible. I confronted him, and he and my sister are going to get counseling. He says he "made a mistake," but that he also believes it is "OK to swat a child."

I am so upset. I used to think the world of my brother-in-law, but now he seems like an ignorant bully to me. I am hoping he will learn better parenting, and that everything will turn out all right. I'm around a lot, and the children are seldom alone with him. What can I do while I wait to see if counseling is effective?

— CONCERNED AUNT IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR CONCERNED: You can suggest that your sister and brother-in-law could also benefit from taking a parenting class and reading some books on child development. Sometimes adults hit children because they have unrealistic expectations about what they "should" be able to do at a certain age. They also do it because they lose their patience. One-year-olds do not always have the ability to control their emotions and behavior. It is up to the parents to set an example — to model good behavior — and hitting sets a poor one. Parenting classes offer valuable insights and suggestions to new parents. To find one, check with a pediatrician, your local high school or community college, or your health plan.

DEAR ABBY: "Book Lover in Pennsylvania" described the frustration of loaning books to friends and never getting them back.

I, too, am a book lover. Some of my books are old friends that have remained on my shelves for years. Periodically, I take them down and reread them. As I have matured, I understand things the author was saying that I did not upon the first reading.

Because many of these books are out of print and irreplaceable, I have designed a bookmark that I print myself on card stock. At the top, I list the title, author, loan date, who I loaned the book to, and the person's phone number.

When I lend a book to someone, I cut off the top portion of the bookmark and fill it out in the presence of the borrower. I keep the top portion taped to my desk calendar, and when a reasonable amount of time has elapsed, if the book has not been returned, I'll telephone. Or, I'll stop by the person's home, ring the doorbell and say politely, "Hi, I've come to collect the book you borrowed." So far, it has worked for me.

If you print my letter, please keep me anonymous.

— Sign me ... P.L.S. IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR P.L.S.: That's a clever solution to a touchy problem. Thank you for sharing it.

DEAR ABBY: My boyfriend and I have been together for seven years. We're happy together, but if I bring up the subject of marriage, he reminds me that he's from India and told me from the beginning that we couldn't marry. We have tried to separate, but couldn't even make it

a month apart. We love each other more than we ever thought we could.

Do you think he is just scared of commitment, or doesn't he want to marry me? I love him, but I'm tired of waiting, and I don't want to be someone's lifetime girlfriend.

— LOVESICK DOWN SOUTH

DEAR LOVESICK: Give your boyfriend credit for honesty. He hasn't misled you. He may come from a conservative, traditional Indian family that expects to arrange a "suitable" marriage for him to a woman from his own culture.

After seven years, you can't be blamed for wanting a commitment, so it's time to bite the bullet, lay your cards on the table and end the romance if you must.

DEAR ABBY: My sister, "Diane," has always dated losers. The relationships have always ended badly. Stalkers, stuffed shirts, chauvinists — you name it.

A few months ago, she started dating a man I'll call "Tim." I won't get into all of his nerve-wracking traits, although one of them seriously upsets me. The other day, Diane finally tried to dump him. Tim said OK, but called soon after saying he was going to kill himself by asphyxiating himself in his car, then he turned on the ignition. She heard his breathing get heavy and the phone went dead. She called the police, who found Tim several hours later in good physical health. He is in a "home" for now, but Diane still calls him. She says she wants to stay with him so he won't kill himself.

No one else in my family knows about this. She made me promise not to say anything. I desperately want to. But if I do, my sister will never trust me again. Please help me. I'm only 19, and I cry every night because I'm so scared for her. Tim gets out in a few days. I don't want him at our house. Talking hasn't helped at all. She refuses to listen to me.

— WORRIED SICK IN NEW JERSEY

DEAR WORRIED SICK: Some promises are made to be broken, and this is one of them. Because Tim has demonstrated that he is mentally unstable, your parents should be told immediately.

TO MY JEWISH READERS: A Happy Passover, one and all!

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