

Man is not a happy camper with girlfriend's choice of tent

DEAR ABBY: I am an outdoorsman with 20-plus years of experience in backpacking and camping. I'm very happy that the woman I'm planning to marry enjoys these activities with me, but she has very little experience.

Last Christmas, she bought a tent for us to use on our outdoor adventures, knowing that I was shopping around and comparing models and trying to find the perfect one. She was very excited to see me tear off the wrapping paper, and I truly appreciate her affection and effort. However, the tent she purchased is much too heavy and bulky to use for backpacking.

We are young and have modest incomes, and we both value thriftiness, so should I ask her to return the tent and purchase one that would be more suitable for our adventures? Or should I keep quiet, purchase the lightweight tent that I desire, and use her gift just when she and I are traveling together on less demanding outings? How can I get the tent I need without dampening her enthusiasm for outdoor activities?

— OUTDOORSMAN
DEAR OUTDOORSMAN: Explain that you love her for wanting to surprise you, but some things are better selected together — such as wedding rings and houses. I am almost positive that



Abigail Van Buren

• Dear Abby

she'll understand your logic if you put it that way. However, if she doesn't, then pack up the tent and suggest that the two of you take a short hike together with HER carrying it.

DEAR ABBY: I am writing to ask your advice on how to deal with a dear friend of many years. She informed my husband and me last week that she is pregnant "accidentally" for the second time by a man she doesn't want to be with.

She spent several hours crying and looking for support and advice from me, but I am not sure how to give it. You see, after two miscarriages last year, my husband and I are trying very hard to conceive again. I am taking progesterone and going through a huge mental and physical struggle to have a child, and it is difficult for me to console her in her pregnancy complaints and upset over the circumstances of her condition (for the second time!). I just want to cry out to her that I

would give my right arm to have the child she is carrying. She knows my situation, and I have tried to tell her how hard this is for me. I am not sure how to save my sanity. Please help!
— HURTING

DEAR HURTING: Your friend's egocentricity is shocking under the circumstances. If she had any empathy for your situation, she would not have sought out your shoulder to cry on. Because I can't "fix" her, the best advice I can offer is to tell her exactly what you have told me. If she's going to remain your friend, she needs to hear it.

DEAR ABBY: My godparents will be celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary soon. However, one of them is suffering from Alzheimer's and is in a nursing home. I would like to send a care package to honor their special day, but I don't know what to include since the Alzheimer's patient can't use many of the things some elderly

people might enjoy. Any suggestions?

— DEVOTED GODCHILD
DEAR DEVOTED: I am sure that if you created an album of special memories for the couple, it would be deeply appreciated. Also, some tapes or CDs of music from "their era" — the '40s, '50s and '60s — might bring them both pleasure.

DEAR ABBY: What is your take on these two similar situations? We were recently invited to attend a surprise birthday party for a man in his late 40s. We were all to meet at a lovely restaurant. Somehow he found out the day before and called each guest, saying he had "other plans and the party is off." (A blatant excuse.)

How about another grown man, my neighbor? I had invited his family over for a small, casual dinner at my home on his birthday. Immediately upon entering, he saw the cake, said, "I don't celebrate my birthday!" slammed the door and left. He didn't even say "thanks anyway."

Is this considered normal behavior? I was trying to show his daughter — my goddaughter — that you "receive by giving," but it sure backfired.

I wasn't trying to embarrass him,

just show him that we love him.

— NEVER AGAIN

DEAR NEVER AGAIN: A birthday party is not a command performance. You have described two individuals who have had "birthday party issues." They probably have good reasons for them, and they are entitled to their feelings.

The first man called the party off in enough time so that he did not inconvenience any of the guests. As to your neighbor, his response was both immature and ungracious. One would think that his daughter or his wife would have warned you about how strongly he felt about birthday celebrations. For them to have allowed the situation to go as far as it did was wrong.

Please do not take what happened too personally. And in the future, if you plan a birthday celebration, try to discreetly find out if one would be welcomed.

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I relocated 1,200 miles away from my family because of my husband's work. I haven't seen my mother since last September. My brother is having his 40th birthday, and Mother called my husband and begged him to let me come. Because I don't work, I don't like to ask my husband for vacation money for myself

alone. He told her I could go.

My daughters, however, are having a hard time dealing with the fact that I'm taking a trip without them. They are 16 and 10, and have their father and grandmother to look after them while I'm gone. Of course, my husband's mother didn't like the fact that I'd be gone for a week. She's afraid she'll have to do something for one of them in my absence. (She does nothing all week but shop.) My girls can take care of themselves, and my 10-year-old will be supervised by my 16-year-old and her father. I am just upset that I'm getting flak about going to see my mother. It has been almost a year! What can I say to my children to make them feel better about Mom taking a trip without them?

— FEELING GUILTY

DEAR FEELING GUILTY: For heaven's sake, stop allowing them to make you feel guilty! It will only lessen your enjoyment of the family reunion. Tell your daughters goodbye, you'll see them in one week, and when you do, you'll bring them back a nice present.

Children tend to be self-centered creatures, so stop expecting them to think more about you than themselves right now. They will survive, trust me. And the respite will be good for all of you.

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