

Family reels from revelation of husband's college affair

DEAR ABBY: I hardly know how to put this into words. It is so difficult. Recently, my husband's college roommate came to visit us. These men are in their 40s, Abby. My son, who is 16, heard them talking out on the patio about their life at college. Obviously, they had no clue he was near.



Abigail Van Buren

● Dear Abby

It seems that the two of them had sex with each other that continued during all the four years they were in college. Once he got an earful about their relationship, my son told me he stopped listening.

As far as I know, this visit was the first in 10 years. I never for one moment would have suspected this. It has frightened me in so many ways, and now I need to discuss the situation with my son and my husband and control the damage. However, my son refuses and is pretending now that it's not important.

How do I handle this? We are simple people, Abby, just plain people with a real problem. Can you help me? — DUMBFOUNDED IN SAN JOSE

DEAR DUMBFOUNDED: Your son may have stopped listening, but he knew what he heard was important enough that

he came and told you. People have been known to "experiment" with their sexuality in college, but a four-year affair goes beyond experimentation.

You need to find out if your husband has continued his bisexual activity since college. If he has, you need to contact your doctor and be tested for sexually transmitted diseases.

Once you know your health status, it will be time to ask your physician for a referral to a licensed family therapist who can help you discuss this with your husband and your son. For everyone's sake, it's important to do it as soon as possible.

DEAR ABBY: My parents have been divorced for about eight years. Frankly, they stayed married too long. They made me and my sib-

lings miserable with their constant fighting. Mom finally left my father, and although Dad tried to win her back, she went through with the divorce.

Dad is now happily remarried, and Mom lives with her boyfriend. My children love their new step-grandmother, "Ellen," and they also love my mother's boyfriend.

I have never invited Dad to any of my children's birthday parties (my oldest will be 10 next month) because I invite my mother. However, I really like Ellen, and when my 5-year-old insisted I send invitations to her grandfather and Ellen, I didn't hesitate.

My mother is extremely selfish and self-centered.

She doesn't want Ellen to have any kind of relationship with "her" grandchildren. She has already

called Ellen and told her so in not-so-nice words.

How can I break it to Mom that my daughter wants everyone there? After all, it's her special day. I'm glad my dad is happy. I like Ellen, and my children love her. I have reached the end of my rope with my mother, but I'm not sure how to express my feelings. — IN THE MIDDLE IN STOCKTON.

DEAR IN THE MIDDLE: Tell your mother that in this day of blended families, you are no longer willing to choose sides. Explain that you and the kids would love to have her share these milestone occasions with you, but their grandfather and his wife are part of the extended family and will be included.

If she doesn't like it, then it is her privilege not to attend — but if she goes that route, she'll only be cutting off her nose to spite her face.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Relationship status bothers young woman

By Harlan Cohen

Dear Harlan,
I am a 26-year-old single female professional, and I have never been in a long-term relationship. As my closest friends get into relationships (even the "perpetually single" one), I find myself feeling resentful, jealous, sad, depressed and alone. I find I have pulled away from them under the guise of "needing space" or having issues in my own life. I feel immature for feeling this way, but I can't help myself. I only feel secure around other single women, or some married women whom I have only known in that context.

I can hardly bear to speak with my married/engaged/seriously dating friends because I feel like a freak. I just don't crave being in a relationship the way they do. I feel I am a little different. Or maybe I haven't met the kind of man I feel the need for yet. Please help me feel more balanced and less insecure.

Desperate in Boston
Dear Desperate in Boston,
This reminds me of when I was 13 years old, attending bar and bat mitzvah parties and standing

around The Snowball dance circle. "The Snowball" began with everyone gathered in a circle while the bar mitzvah boy or bat mitzvah girl picked a partner to dance with. After a couple of minutes, the bandleader would say, "Snowball."

Then, the couple would kiss, split apart and pick someone new from the outer circle. After a few Snowballs, life on the outside felt like a freak show. At this point, I'd get the urge to go to the bathroom and remove myself from the circle. The point: Until you can get comfortable in your role, what happens in your circle of friends will make you crazy. At 26, only you can define your role so you can stand your ground and stop running. Define your role and stand proud.

Harlan is the author of "The Naked Roommate: And 107 Other Issues You Might Run Into in College" (Sourcebooks). Write Harlan at [harlan\(at\)helpmeharlan.com](mailto:harlan(at)helpmeharlan.com) or visit www.helpmeharlan.com online: www.helpmeharlan.com. Send paper to Help Me, Harlan! 2506 N. Clark St., Ste. 223, Chicago, IL 60614.


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