Smiling receptionist is not happy

DEAR ABBY: I am working temporarily as a receptionist. I get tired of greeting people, but I put on a smile and do it. But it upsets me when I make contact with someone and say, "Good morning," only to have him or her look away and ignore me.

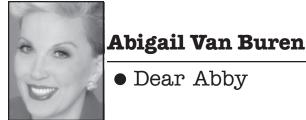
Would it be OK to say, "Excuse me, I said, 'Good morning'"? If not, how do you suggest dealing with rude people like these? I think they should be made aware of their poor manners. But how?

right to grunt inaudibly, or worse, completely ignore the greeting.

> TIRED OF SMILING, RICHMOND, VA.

DEAR TIRED OF SMILING: As a receptionist, your job is to offer a smiling, friendly welcome for your employer when clients walk in the door. Of course, the usual and proper response to a courteous and friendly greeting is to return it. People who don't are rude — or may have serious problems on their minds. However, it is NOT your job to teach them good manners, something their mothers should have done years ago. My advice to you is to keep smiling, and also keep looking for a job you find more fulfilling.

DEAR ABBY: My father died suddenly a short time ago. Ever since, I have been having a hard time trying to sort out my feelings. I have yet to break down and cry, and I don't know how to say goodbye to a man who meant so



a great man, my hero, and the only they are involved in athletics. My man I have ever wanted to be like. Abby, I feel guilty about not having broken down and cried yet. I law, all she talks about are the niece want those feelings to come, but and nephew. She never asks about Too many people think it's all they won't. Please give me some my children. I have taken to politely advice.

> - GORDON IN IOWA **DEAR GORDON: Please ac**cept my condolences for the loss of your father. There is no "right" or "wrong" way to grieve. Death this problem? is something that affects different people in different ways. Sometimes the survivors feel numb, which may be why it's hard for you to cry.

this. Joining a grief support dren have some accomplishment group might help you in getting through this period. However, the last thing you need on top of the pain of your loss right now is to to handle this. Speaking up and beat yourself up because you talking about what caring, haven't behaved in a fashion you thoughtful, creative children thought you "should" have.

DEAR ABBY: My sister-in-law never stops bragging about her kids. And these brats constantly compete ten by Abigail Van Buren, also to be the center of attention, spite- known as Jeanne Phillips, and was fully putting my children down at family gatherings.

much to me and my siblings. He was extra time with these kids because 69440, Los Angeles, Calif. 90069.

children are about the same age, but when I'm around my mother-inexcusing myself when she does this, or when my sister-in-law starts bragging, or her kids start drawing attention to themselves.

Is this the proper way to handle

- READY TO SCREAM IN OLYMPIA, WASH. **DEAR READY TO SCREAM:** Your sister-in-law appears to be a natural when it comes to public Please do not feel guilty about relations. Surely your own chilthat you can pipe up and mention at these family gatherings.

> Leaving the room is not the way your children are is something you should have started doing long ago.

Editor's note: Dear Abby is writfounded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at My mother-in-law spends a lot of www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box





TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Cosette O'Brien of Colby worked on a craft project during the Northwest Research-Extension Center Field Day Thursday. Children had the chance to get "crafty" while their parents learned about the right way to care for grass or the flower trial the experiment station participated in this summer.



Mother-in-law taking up time

BY DR. JOYCE BROTHERS

Dear Dr. Brothers: Against my better judgment, I let my husband move his mother into our home when her last lease was up and she was complaining about being lonely. She's been alone for years, but now she seems to need constant attention. I am used to being an empty nester, with my children grown and no one tying me down as long as I am home at 6 p.m. to make dinner. Now I feel I have to be at my mother-in-law's beck and call all day. She's not ill or disabled in any way, just lonesome and needy. My husband says he would do the same for my mother, were she still living. How do I answer that, and how do I get my freedom back?

— F.R. Dear F.R.: You need to sit down with your husband and see if you can divide up the duties that seem to make having an extra family member in your home such a chore. She needn't be made aware that you are taking turns cooking her dinner or watching her favorite TV show with her, but it will make it more pleasant for everyone if you each have some downtime. It doesn't sound as though you have any real emotional connection with your husband's mother. That's too bad. Perhaps you would find her easier to live with if you could find some common interests to talk about, read about or go see such as a shopping trip or attending a class or lecture together. Also, since your mother-in-law is not infirm in mind or body, why don't vou introduce her to some other women and men her age through a local seniors' center or religious institution, if she is interested in that sort of thing? Having her own set of friends and activities would certainly help you regain that sense of freedom you so enjoy. You can call upon your husband to do some thinking, too - the more he pitches in, the less resentment you're going to feel. Dear Dr. Brothers: I know you will think I am a terrible person, but I am taking a chance that you might understand. I can't really confess this to anyone else. My fiance is in Iraq for at least six more months (he's been away for almost a year already). Instead of feeling more attached to him and counting the days until he comes home, I am feeling more and more like I wish I didn't know him. The truth is, I forget what we are all about. There's another guy I would like to go out with, but I don't want to have to give up my ring. What should I do? A.J. Dear A.J.: Long-distance relationships are always difficult, and having your fiance away in a war zone adds all sorts of extra stress to your vision of a future together. With irregular communication because of the circumstances, it's easy to lose the intimacy you built up before your fiance's departure, and another guy who is within your grasp seems a lot more real to you right now. Those

around you are probably all en- should give some thought to how meshed in the fantasy romance that will make you feel, and how between you two separated lovers, which puts even more pressure on you to maintain that vignette of the maiden and her returning hero. Dumping a soldier give some thought to your timing. in a war zone is bound to mark If you decide you have to break up you as a cruel and heartless lover. with him, telling him face to face I'm sure all these ideas are com- is more respectful and seems to be plicating your decision.

worth it to send a Dear John let- you'll feel better about everyter or wait for that next overseas thing in the end. phone call to drop the bomb. You

your boyfriend will react. You can justify just about any action by wanting to be honest and truthful, but I am suggesting that you a better way of doing things. If So ... you need to decide if it is you can wait it out to see him,

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