Engagement satisfies commitment needs for couple

no kids, and after one short and one long marriage, I have decided that I am simply not marriage material. The problem is, I have met some-

one I would like to spend the foreseeable future with, and I really can't see ever enjoying going out with anyone else.

(he's a wedding "virgin"), but I told him I will get engaged instead. That way, we can show our com-

mitment, and yet I won't be in that awful place I can't seem to get right. This is a sort of compromise. He thinks I have some emotional problem if I won't get married. What do

T.G. probably know yourself a bit bet-

about the institution of marriage.



Dr. Joyce **Brothers**

Ask Dr. Brothers

about it — not jumping to the conclusion that you don't love him, which would be the obvious, simplistic thing to assume. But I don't think he's quite hit the nail but it's not all about your fears, either. It's about your fears plus your experience.

Getting engaged as an end in it-Dear T.G.: I think that you self is nothing new. There are She complains about her aches and thousands of families with chilter than your boyfriend knows dren in which the man is de- he's found nothing). She wants to you, and you realize that at the scribed as the woman's fiance. buy a long-term-care policy bemoment you are a bit phobic Whetherthere is a ring and a date cause — well, you never know Your boyfriend seems to be tak- case, you'd both want to agree on pacitated. And her favorite topic of

what emotional, physical and financial commitments are intended by your engagement. This social experiment might have an unintended effect: After a period of engagement, you may grow into another kind of couple, who want to go to the next step in your commitment and actually get He is pressing me to get married ing a rather healthy attitude married. I believe you don't want to do that now; but I also believe strongly in the possibility for growth and change. Congratula-Dear Dr. Brothers: My wife and

> on the head — it's not about him, I are both in our 50s; our kids have gone off to college. I thought this would now be a time when we could enjoy ourselves. Instead, all she can talk about is how we're getting old. pains (she's been to the doctor, and **set is an open question. In your** when you're going to become inca-

conversation is about some disease and health-care plans for old age helpless. This puts me at a big disthat a friend or relative has come down with — and how we might suffer the same thing before long. She's starting to creep me out! How can I get her to understand that we likely have 20 or 30 years left of fun and frolic?

Dear W.P.: Your wife sounds like she has some anxieties about her empty nest and what this means about her stage in the life cycle. It's not necessarily a matter of aging, or not aging well chances are, your wife looks as good as the next 50-something, or could if she didn't feel so old, right? But some women (and men) do cling to an outdated view of how they are supposed to act in middle age, and have a vision of **old age rapidly approaching in** take my investments, or which which life as they know it is essentially over.

There is nothing wrong with planning ahead, securing funds ten insignificant things — I am eat, or decide to pick the fourth

— as long as they make financial sense for you. Perhaps with one of you interested in fun and frolic, she feels the need to be the serious one who is saving up for the rainy days to come. But, since people age at different rates, you may have to stop ridiculing her and start trying to adjust to the situation. Reassurance — along with a bit of that fun and frolic might go a long way toward calming her fears, while letting her know that you will always be there for her, no matter what age she feels.

Dear Dr. Brothers: I have such a hard time making decisions that I am the laughingstock of my family and friends! I can make a decision route to take on the way to the theme park. But when it comes to things with lots and lots of options — of-

advantage when ordering at a restaurant or shopping for clothes. It seems the more I have to work with, the worse I get. Why is this, and how can I get everyone to stop rolling their eyes when the waiter comes?

Dear L.T.: First, I think you should stop beating yourself up. At least you are a deliberate, thoughtful person who doesn't go around making faulty snap judgments. If you can't see the same humor in your situation that your family and friends do, then work on some strategies for coping with those situations where you know you are going to be hemming and having as the waiter ... well. waits. Pick up the menu as soon when it comes to which direction to as you sit down at a restaurant, while the others are still chatting. Arrange to order last (although I bet you already do!). Try planning in advance what you want to

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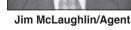
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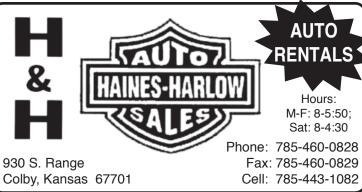
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