

Mom doesn't like stepdad's focus



Dr. Joyce Brothers

● Ask Dr. Brothers

Dear Dr. Brothers: I was happily married until recently — my second, his first. The problem is that I don't know if I love my husband anymore, because I seem to have the most bizarre worry about him. He is very giving and loving, but he seems to give my 5-year-old daughter a lot of attention. (She has a dad she sees frequently.) I don't like it when he sits her on his lap, or touches her in any way. Is it me, or him, or what? — D.D.

Dear D.D.: It is always awkward to bring an unrelated man into a household in which a child's biological father is no longer there. Some stepdads have a reputation of being resentful of being placed in a position to have to take care of another man's child, while others gladly take on such responsibilities. Then there are the dangerous few who feel free to be psychologically, physically or sexually abusive to the child, feeling it's OK because she isn't his "blood." Since sexual abuse can come in the form of a gentle or seductive foray, it is very hard to pin down whether the stepdad is interested in the child in a loving way or as a potential victim. And this seems to be what is worrying you.

I think you need to make sure that your husband is never alone with your child, at least until you sort out your feelings. Has he given you real reason to fear his behavior, or are you being influenced by the natural protectiveness of a mom who has heard an overload of advice about sexual predators? Or were you victimized as a child yourself? Any of these could be skewing your thoughts. Don't ignore your instincts, but try to find out why you are thinking this way. If you really find that you are unable to trust your husband, you will have to let him go. It's really as simple as that.

Dear Dr. Brothers: My husband and I had a healthy, happy baby four years ago. We were so excited that we decided right away to give her a brother or sister. Our second child, whom we love very much, was born with disabilities. She is now a toddler, and we can't seem to agree on what is best for her. I like to teach her how to do things, but my husband likes to spoil her. We are at each other's throats, and even our older daughter is feeling the tension and is acting out. I just don't think I can face years more of this dysfunctional family. Please tell me if there is anything to hope for. — J.B.

Dear J.B.: I don't need to tell you how difficult it is to have a child you love so much but will have to watch suffer with limitations. And despite the wish to consider each of your children as separate individuals, I'm sure you can't help but compare your firstborn, with all her capabilities, with your second. All this leads to a marriage filled with constant stress, and you and your husband have a lot of hard emotional work ahead if you are to proceed as a team with mutual goals for your partnership and your family.

You both seem to have different views of your daughter and what she can achieve and become. Your husband is following his natural instincts as protector and facilitator, trying to smooth the way. You are looking ahead to a life in which you'd like your daughter to be as accomplished and self-sufficient as possible, in spite of her limitations. You both have much to offer your daughters. Don't let your older child get lost in the shuffle or take on the role of a "little mother." You and your husband could benefit from a parents' group, where you can learn from how others handle issues of disabled children.

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Hansen Museum offers art classes

How many of you have been flipping through your channels on the television and happened to come across the "Joy of Painting with Bob Ross" program?

If you stopped for only a moment, you would have been captivated by the simple and easy method of his painting techniques. The Hansen Museum in Logan will have two certified instructors that teach classes at the museum on a regular basis.

T.R. Mathews and Sandy Seamone, Arriba, Colo., will instruct, step by step, revealing how easy it is to paint the Bob Ross way. No previous experience is neces-

sary and anyone can do it.

On Feb. 24, the class will be painting the "Little Cowboy" and on Feb. 25, the "Zebra". The classes will run 9 a.m. to noon and 1-3 p.m. both days.

This learning opportunity is sponsored by the Hansen Museum Continued Education Program and offered at reduced rates to the public. For more information or to register by phone call 785-6894846. Bring a roll of paper towels, other supplies are provided.

For more information this and other classes and exhibits, contact 785-689-4846 or check out our web at www.hansemnuseum.org.

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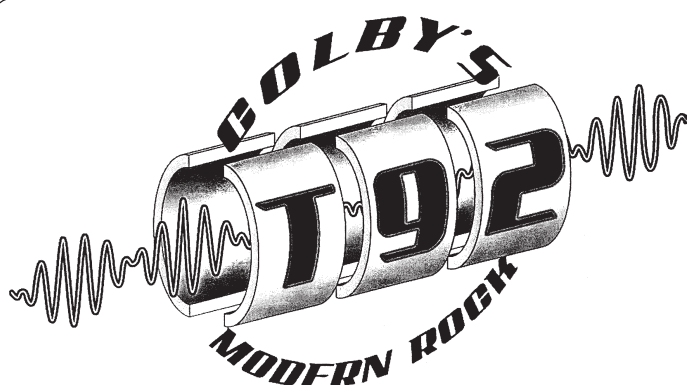
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