

# Father insists son needs agreement

Dear Dr. Brothers: I'm about to start making plans to be married to the man in my life — one I know, and pray, will always be the one and only. Both of my two sets of parents and stepparents acted as if they were thrilled at the prospect of my marriage, as well as with my choice.

My dad, who happens to be the head of a very successful business, says I must have a prenuptial agreement, one he's already had his lawyer make out. I don't want this. We don't need it, and I'm terrified that if I ask my guy to sign this, he'll leave me.

This is his second marriage, and I know he's learned from all his earlier mistakes, and I trust him in every way. I don't know what to do, but I can't ask him.

I also don't want to lose my father. I love him. What can I do?

— N.S.

**Dear N.S.: This man might not object as much as you anticipate, especially if you explain your conflicts about the matter. Since this is his second marriage, he's had personal experience with divorce and possibly might regret not having signed some kind of agreement in his former marriage. He might even be sympathetic with your father's point of view.**

**It worries me somewhat that you're so reluctant to mention this to your fiance. It suggests that your trust of him isn't as deep as you might think.**

**Ideally, couples should be able to at least discuss any subject, and preferably should always force themselves to talk freely about subjects that might be hot-button issues before they walk down the aisle. It might help, however, if you could ask your father to go with you when this is brought up, or possibly the two men might arrange to meet privately. Since this is your father's second marriage as well, he might have special interests and be aware of the advantages of these agreements.**

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Dear Dr. Brothers: Our daughter has always loved games and been good at sports, but now that she's in middle school, her father insists that



**Dr. Joyce Brothers**

● **Ask Dr. Brothers**

she focus mostly on studies, and feels that if she has any extra time, it should be spent reading so she'll be learning not only about literature but also improving her vocabulary and her writing ability. My guess is, she's never going to be the exceptional student or scholar he's hoping for.

Also, by pushing and trying to control her so, I worry that she won't enjoy reading later as much as she might. He's so success- and work-oriented.

— P.E.

**Dear P.E.: I agree with you about you concerns. I think your husband needs to remember that there are many different kinds of success. If your daughter is well-adjusted, able to make friends and is generally happy with her life, that leads to the kind of personal success that will help her find employment in which she can make use of whatever talents she has.**

**Actually, studies have revealed that participation in sports seems to have great benefits — for girls especially. Playing in team sports, competing and the desire for winning build confidence and self-esteem that will serve participants well in academic studies, as well as in the business world.**

**As long as your daughter can keep up with her regular school-work, both you and your husband should take pride in her athletic accomplishments. Believe me, I'm a firm supporter of the necessity of a good education, not just because it's necessary in terms of getting jobs, but also because it leads to greater fulfillment in later life.**

**However, at her age, interest in sports could make her healthier and more disciplined.**

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## Incident spotlights obsession on appearance

CHICAGO (AP) — With a reputation for emphasizing brains over conventional beauty, the women of the Delta Zeta sorority at Indiana's DePauw University endured the jokes and unkind nicknames: their chapter was widely known among students as the “dog house.”

“As a sorority, they had a different image on campus,” says Cindy Babington, the university's dean of students. “Student culture was not kind to them.”

Obsessing about looks has long been a rite of passage for young people — well before the days, nearly two decades ago, when tennis star Andre Agassi brashly proclaimed that “image is everything” in an advertising campaign.

Today, though, some worry that the fixation on outward appearance has gotten out of control — with young people's ever-increasing focus on everything from celebrity and skinny jeans to marketing themselves on MySpace, Facebook and YouTube.

The women of Delta Zeta know all about the pressure. With chapter membership dwindling, sorority leaders recently took drastic measures. They kicked out 23 members from the stately brick mansion near campus, drawing accusations that the women's weight, looks and race didn't fit the image the sorority was going for.

Sorority leaders insist that those who left weren't committed to recruiting. “It was not a beauty contest,” says Casey Jolley, the chapter's interim president and one of only five members who remain at the house.

But Rachel Pappas, a DePauw junior who was among several other members who left in protest, finds that hard to believe — and calls discrimination based on image “the new racism.”

“When you look at all these things and see that all of them have been eliminated, you wonder what it could be other than the image issue,” Pappas says.

That the evictions happened so publicly, she adds, now provides the chance to address the larger issue — and a newfound brazenness that cultural trend-watchers say is prompting more people to freely

voice their biases.

These days, “American Idol” dedicates hours of airtime to auditions in which judges openly chortle and make fun of would-be contestants' looks, style and personality quirks. Taking a cue from the grocery tabloids, entertainment magazines and TV shows now regularly pick apart celebrities' appearance and attire.

It's no wonder, one professor says, that students feel free to mock those who don't fit their image ideal.

“It's out from under the rocks.

“They're saying what so many people think and believe,” says Thomas Cottle, an education professor at Boston University who has studied the way appearance affects public affirmation. “It's tragic.”

There have been a few successful attempts to broaden the beauty ideal.

TV viewers have embraced the bushy-browed, braces-wearing “Ugly Betty,” while advertiser Dove has successfully launched a “Campaign for Real Beauty” that includes women with tummy rolls and wrinkles.

But, Cottle says, those examples go against the flow.

Recent studies have found that a growing number of young adults are more narcissistic and materialistic than their predecessors. And more of them are seeking spa treatments, plastic surgery and anti-aging remedies at younger and younger ages.

It's gotten to the point that image is the “currency” on which youth culture runs, says Jessica Weiner, a Los Angeles-based author and public speaker who specializes in young people and self-esteem.

“We have flung so far out of control in this society based on appearances,” Weiner says.

“We're incredibly more focussed on image than we were even 10 years ago.”

Denise Fedewa, an executive vice president and planning director at ad agency Leo Burnett USA, also has noticed an obsession with image in her work in other countries, such as Japan and India, where more career opportunities are opening up for women.