Piercing debate about scars seen and unseen

DEAR ABBY: I just finished reading the letter from "Upset in Collegeville, Pa.," regarding the 15year-old girl who wanted to get her belly button pierced.

Your response included, "As long as the procedure is done hygienically, it shouldn't cause any damage."

I am a gynecologist. I have observed that navel piercings often cause significant permanent scar-



ring, especially at the upper piercing site. These scars are far larger than one would expect.

They can also be associated with darkening of the skin at the scar site, which makes them even more cosmetically unacceptable.

I can't explain why other piercings such as earlobes usually have no scarring while navel piercings often result in unsightly permanent scars.

Anyone considering a belly button piercing should be aware of this potentially permanent problem. OREGON GYNECOLOGIST

DEAR OREGON GYNECOLO-GIST: Thank you for writing. Although I live in Los Angeles, probably the navel-piercing capital of the United States, I cannot claim to have seen as many belly buttons "up close and personal" as you have, so I bow to your expertise. Many readers commented regarding that letter. Read on:

DEARABBY: May I add a note to your response to the parents who agreed to let their daughter pierce her belly button, then changed their minds? I am 62 and still can't quite

forgive my father for much the same thing.

He was old-fashioned and wouldn't let my older sister drive. When I was 15, I begged to take driver's ed and get my license at 16. He agreed — on the condition that I pay for the lessons myself.

Well, I did - and passed with flying colors. But when I turned 16, he refused to allow me to get my license. When I asked why he'd lied to me, he said he hadn't lied. He simply thought I'd never be able to save enough to pay for the course. Even after 46 years, I still think he lied to

My advice to the parents: Do not break your word. It could damage

your relationship with your son or daughter forever. — MARJ G., WESLACO, TEXAS

DEAR MARJ: I agree. She fulfilled her part of the bargain, so the parents shouldn't have reneged on their promise.

DEAR ABBY: In some states, piercing isn't legal before age 16, even with parental consent.

If the parents relent, I hope they'll find out what the local laws are and go to the most reputable person who performs piercings.

My advice to potential piercers: Stay away from those who will do the DREN), SANTAMONICA, CALIF. piercing regardless of state law. -SUZANNE, PRIMEVAL INK TAT- you stated it very well. TOO, MONROE, WASH

DEAR SUZANNE: Good advice. DEAR ABBY: While I respect the right to change one's mind, the relationship of a parent to a child can be permanently damaged by relatively small betravals.

In today's world, belly button piercing is little more than a fashion statement, and the parents who are waffling over their promise to let their daughter pierce her navel in exchange for good grades risk far more by breaking their promise than by allowing the piercing. — GEORGE (AYOUNG PARENT WITH CHIL-

DEAR GEORGE: I agree. And

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Saturday and Sunday Movies

SATURDAY MORNING 10:01 35/31 FMC Movie "Fate Is the Hunter" (1964, Drama) Glenn Ford, Rod Taylor. An airline executive attempts to prove his friend wasn't responsible for a plane crash by simulating the event. Directed by Ralph Nelson. NR 11:00 20/34 USA Movie "Braveheart" (1995, Drama) Mel Gibson, Sophie 4:00 12/3 WB Movie "Die

Marceau, Patrick McGoohan. A Scottish rebel rallies his countrymen against England. Directed by Mel Gibson. (DVS) 63/54 BRAVO Movie "Cold Comfort Farm" (1995, Comedy) Kate Beckinsale, Eileen Atkins. Premiere. In 1930s England, a sophisticated young woman \ transforms the lives of her rustic relatives at a ramshackle old farm. Directed by John

Schlesinger. PG AFTERNOON 12:01 35/31 FMC Movie "The Dark Corner" (1946, Mystery) Lucille Ball, Mark Stevens. A devoted secretary sets out to clear her private- eye boss of a trumped-up murder charge.

Directed by Henry Hathaway. 1:00 63/54 BRAVO Movie "Silverado" (1985, Western) Kevin Kline, Danny Glover. The destinies of four cowboys converge en route to a frontier town in Lawrence Kasdan's tribute to the Western genre. Directed by Lawrence Kasdan. **PG-13** Hard 2" (1990, Drama) Bruce Willis, Bonnie Bedelia, William Sadler. An

L.A. cop battles terrorists in Washington. Directed by Renny Harlin.

SUNDAY MORNING 10:30 28/37 TNT Movie "The Fifth Element" (1997, Science Fiction) Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman, Ian Holm. A cabbie finds a woman who may save Earth from disaster. Directed by Luc Besson.

AFTERNOON 12:00 36/53 A&E Movie "Serpico" (1973, Drama) Al Pacino, Tony Roberts, John Randolph. Undercover cop Frank Serpico exposes police corruption. Directed by Sidney Lumet. 2:30 63/54 BRAVO Movie

"Black Rain" (1989, Drama) Michael Douglas, Ken Takakura. A detective clashes with the Japanese police and the brutal Osaka underworld when he searches for a fugitive mobster. Directed by Ridley Scott. R

3:00 20/34 USA Movie

"The Firm" (1993, Drama) Tom Cruise, Gene Hackman, Jeanne Tripplehorn. A law school grad signs on with a sinister Tennessee firm. Directed by Sydney Pollack.

3:01 35/31 FMC Movie

"Tora!Tora! Tora!" (1970, Drama) Jason Robards. Tatsuya Mihashi. Both the U.S. and Japanese viewpoints are portrayed in this Oscarwinning account of the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. Directed by R. Fleischer, T. Masuda, K. Fukasaku. G 3:30 5/14 HBO Movie "The

First Wives Club" (1996. Comedy) Goldie Hawn, Diane Keaton. Three former college friends join forces to prove to their ex-husbands that hell hath no fury like women scorned. Directed by Hugh Wilson. PG