

DAUGHTER-IN-LAW'S PLOY IS SHAMEFUL



ANNIE'S MAILBOX

Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar

Dear Annie: I am the father of five children, four of whom are adults. My two oldest sons, "Jason" and "Jared," are married, but their wives hate each other and refuse to attend family functions where the other may be present.

My wife and I have refused to involve ourselves in the fight between our daughters-in-law. We invite both to family functions and they decide whether they will attend.

Recently, however, Jason's wife told us that she and my son will not speak to us or visit if we have any contact with Jared and his wife. She says it is disrespectful to her when we speak to Jared or his wife. This is especially difficult now because Jason and his wife are expecting our first grandchild.

My wife and I have refused to give in to our daughter-in-law's blackmail, but we don't want to give up contact with Jason or our future grandchild. Any advice? — Squeezed in Kentucky

Dear Squeezed: For shame. The only disrespectful person here is your daughter-in-law, who is behaving like a spoiled brat. For her to punish you because she can't deal with her sister-in-law is a sign of immaturity and selfishness. The fact that your son won't speak up

indicates he lacks backbone and independent thought. She also may be an abuser who is trying to isolate her husband from his family. Talk to your son and tell him you are so sorry his wife feels she has the right to dictate your relationships with others. Explain that if she doesn't wish to see you or the rest of the family, that is her choice, but you hope he will have the decency to keep in touch on his own. A supportive wife would insist on it.

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Dear Annie: For some time now, I've felt that one of my friends is avoiding me. "Kenny" never answers when I call, and he doesn't return my messages. Also, if I go over to his apartment (when I know he's supposed to be home), his roommate tells me he's not there.

Is he avoiding me, am I paranoid, or am I just being a nuisance? — Feeling Neglected

Dear Neglected: Well, you're not paranoid. Stop calling and dropping by Kenny's apartment. It makes you seem desperate. If Kenny wants to talk, he knows how to reach you. We recommend you spend your time with people who appreciate your company.

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Dear Annie: I am writing to urge you to call your readers' attention to a health condition that is frequently ignored but affects more than one in four American families. It silently erodes the sufferer's quality of life, undermines family relationships and fuels depression. I'm talking about hearing loss. It affects more than 31.5 million Americans, and surprisingly, most are below retirement age.

Many of today's baby boom-

ers suffer hearing loss from listening to loud music or living in noisy environments. It can cause irritability, negativism, anger, fatigue, tension, stress and depression and can lead to social withdrawal, rejection and loneliness. A recent study found that Americans with hearing loss make significantly less money than people with normal hearing — but that use of a hearing aid on the job reduces income loss by 50 percent. Unfortunately, too many people wait years before getting treatment, becoming more and more disconnected. With modern advances in technology, more than 90 percent of people with hearing loss can be helped with hearing aids. Modern hearing aids are sleek and often cannot be easily seen.

If your readers find themselves asking people to repeat themselves, think others are mumbling, have trouble hearing children and women or have ringing in their ears, I encourage them to have their hearing checked by a professional. — Sergei Kochkin, Ph.D., Executive Director, Better Hearing Institute

Dear Dr. Kochkin: Thank you for the excellent information. Readers can get a copy of "Your Guide to Better Hearing" by calling 1-800-EAR-WELL (1-800-327-9355) or visiting the Better Hearing Institute at betterhearing.org.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@PE.com or write to Annie's Mailbox c/o The Press-Enterprise, P.O. Box 792, Riverside, CA 92502-0792

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