

YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Part II

Don't tell me what to do



By ELIZABETH SZLEK, M.A., NCC

In my last column I talked about the breakdown of simple obedience, and how children, especially, are not getting the message of respecting the wishes of those in authority over them. Now it is time to look at interactions between adults and how this same reluctance to bend to the wishes of others is hurting relationships.

IS IT AN AMERICAN THING?

We all know that America was supposedly built up by rough and tumble types who set out into the wilderness to tame it, and in doing so, seemed to have lived by their own rules. Or something like that. But, no one was stricter than the Puritans who came over to Plymouth Rock. They had rules for just about everything, and stiff punishments for those who dared disobey. Other colonies were a bit looser in discipline, such as Virginia, and in truth, some of those 18th Century explorers did set out from that general direction. We all have heard tales of the Wild West, and the lawlessness of the types hanging around out there. So, there is something of a myth about how a real American listens only to the beat of his or her own drum. Then, we listen to the stories of the "Yearning for Zion" sect, and we can see where that insistence on autocracy can lead. Because, of course, when you get to the personal level, the little autocrats are actually beating their drum for a lot of other people. If the Unabomber just kept living out there in the wild, no one would have cared what he did. But, when he decided he had to blow things up, he exceeded the bounds of what is permitted. So, there is a fine dance between what I want and what you want, and civilization lives in the spaces between.

A LOOK AT MARRIAGE

I do a lot of marriage counseling, which can be either wonderfully fulfilling or a horrible exercise in futility. It all depends upon how inclined the two people are to submit their wills to the other. After all, the essence of marriage is that in joining two people together, they have created a new entity, much like a corporation. This thing, the marriage, exists in and of itself, and if it is to succeed, each of them must give up his or her self will for the good of the marriage. Now, I have seen plenty of one-sided marriages, where one partner gives 100 percent, and the other much less. This would be like putting two people inside a horse suit, and only one of them is walking. Won't get far!

Sometimes, one of the people thinks the other is there to serve them, and they are there

to receive that service. Uh, no. They are both there to serve the other, perhaps in different ways, but that is the job description. And, get this, you will often need to request assistance from your spouse.

NAGGING AND BULLYING

Nagging. Men love to use this word, but really, I have never found a woman who was doing it. I have seen plenty of women who try to get their husbands to do something, and who will repeat the request, first politely, and then with more and more anger. This is not nagging, a word which was probably created by a man to label requests he does not feel like honoring. She might say, "Honey, would you please make sure the garbage gets out tonight?" If the husband who is requested to do this service is passive-aggressive, he will say, "OK." The next morning, the bag is still sitting in the kitchen and he is gone. Probably, somewhere in the brain a little voice was saying to him, "Nobody is going to tell ME what to do!" And then, I ask, "Why not? Who are you to ignore your wife when she asks for a simple service?" Naturally, if the request is repeated he will tell her she is a nag, and this is supposed to end the discussion. But, of course, it won't, because she is asking, not nagging. But, if the guy really can't take out the garbage, he should tell her, and she should try to understand.

The other side of the coin would be something like this. Perhaps there are financial problems, and he tells her again and again not to buy stuff. But she does, anyway. "He's not going to tell me what to do!" There you have it! Again, a total breakdown of the marriage corporation. If you are not in it together, you are not in it.

I recently saw a young couple who had bought a home they could not afford, and they had constructed a budget which was extremely strict. Problems arose when she bought a bag of chips. He felt she was not honoring their agreement, but I pointed out that few people would be able to be house rich and otherwise poor for thirty years and not wreck their marriage. They decided to sell the house, so that they could live a more enjoyable life.

THE SOLUTION

Well, of course the solution is to talk to one another honestly, to put the other first, and to stop playing games to "get" the spouse. But mostly, it is to give up the idea that "Nobody can tell me what to do." That's just wrong and definitely relationship-killing philosophy.

ELIZABETH SZLEK is the Director of The Door Counseling Center of Old Forge and Utica. Questions and comments can be directed to her at (315) 768-8900 and info@thedoorcounseling.com. J

Bake from page 35

May 17 and 18, at the Old Forge lakefront. Abbie's goal is to send a nice, big fat check for \$1,000 to help feed hungry American children. Boy, we'd better sell a heck-of-a-lotta cookies!

You, dear readers, can help this very fine cause in three ways.

- You can bake some cookies, muffins, cakes, pies or candy. ANY kind is great. If

you can bake, please call 369-2885, and either Abbie or I will give you the drop off and packaging details. You can also e-mail me at: Inwillard@hotmail.com. We need all goodies by Friday, May 16.

- Come to Paddlefest and buy some treats and maybe some hot coffee. Yum!

- Make a donation, either by stopping by our booth or going online to

Gabs.Strength.org. This is also a great Web site to check out, as it describes in detail how all funds raised are allocated.

You can also call me or e-mail me for easy recipe ideas— you KNOW I have a gazillion!

Please plan on baking for a wonderful cause, and maybe stopping by our booth at Paddlefest for some treats.

We can't wait to see you there! J

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Alcoholics Anonymous Area Meetings

Sunday.....5:30pm Niccolis Memorial Church, Old Forge, Crosby Blvd., also AIAnon
Monday.....7:30pm Inlet Community Church, Inlet, South Shore Rd.
7:30pm Long Lake Town Hall Nutrition Site
Wednesday.....12 noon Woodgate Library (next to Post Office), Woodgate 8pm Niccolis Memorial Church, Old Forge, Crosby Blvd., also AIAnon
Thursday.....7:30pm Woodgate Library (next to Post Office), Woodgate 7:30pm Indian Lake, St. Mary's Catholic Church 7:30pm Long Lake, United Methodist Church
Friday.....9:00am Niccolis Memorial Church, Old Forge, Crosby Blvd. 8pm Niccolis Memorial Church, Old Forge, Crosby Blvd.
Saturday.....8pm Niccolis Memorial Church, Old Forge, Crosby Blvd.

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