



By Gregory Ramey, PhD, child psychologist at Dayton Children's and *Dayton Daily News* columnist

Questions from Readers

Question:

My son doesn't like his third grade teacher. His previous teachers were much warmer and supportive with the students. Even though we are midway through the school year, I'm inclined to meet with the principal and ask that my son be moved to another classroom. He complains about her daily, and I don't want him to develop a negative attitude towards school.

Answer:

We don't always have the luxury of interacting with people who fit our style. Your son needs to learn to adjust to teachers of various approaches. He can't and shouldn't expect that every adult with whom he interacts will be "warm and supportive."

Your child needs to stop complaining about his teacher, and focus on learning. Don't meet with the principal. That would only reward your son's whining, and encourage his expectations that you will intervene if things are not the way he wants. If you have specific issues regarding the teacher's performance, then you should meet with her directly and express those concerns.

Question:

I inadvertently read the diary of my 15-year-old, and was shocked by some of the things she had written. I'm worried about her safety. Based upon what I read in her journal, I'm concerned that she may be suicidal.

I realize that her confidence was violated in reading the journal, but now that I have this information I don't feel like I can keep it to myself. How should I approach this?

Answer:

Your daughter's safety is your first priority. Since you have concerns that she may hurt herself, you should get an appointment with a mental health professional as soon as possible. That professional can evaluate your daughter for depression and suicidal risk, and work with you to develop an appropriate treatment plan.

At some point, based upon the guidance of the mental health professional, you'll need to tell your daughter that you read her journal. However, please don't use the words to her that you used in this letter. Reading someone else's journal is never "inadvertent."

Question

We have three biological children, and would now like to adopt several children. Since adoption would have a significant impact on them, I feel like we should discuss this with our children and have a family vote about this important decision. My children are mature and responsible, 8, 12, and 15 year olds, and I think they have a right to make a decision on something that would affect them.

My husband disagrees, and thinks this is a decision to be made only by us. Your thoughts?

Answer:

Adopting children affects not only you and your husband, but the other children as well. I agree that you should discuss this option with your children, and solicit their thoughts and concerns regarding adding more children to your family. However, this decision should not be made by a vote, but by you and your husband after considering a variety of factors, including the thoughts and feelings of your children.

Gregory Ramey, Ph.D., is a child psychologist and vice president for outpatient services at The Children's Medical Center of Dayton. For more of his columns, visit www.childrensdayton.org/ramey. Send comments to Dr. Ramey at rameyg@childrensdayton.org.