



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

## Questions from readers

### Question:

My husband was emotionally abused as a young boy, and I am very concerned about how he treats our kids. He is a loving and caring spouse, but sometimes screams at our boys and gets out of control. My husband has been in therapy for over a year and I've been very supportive and understanding. He feels that he cannot get over what happened to him as a child, and I'm not sure what to do.

### Answer:

I get really tired of adults blaming their bad behavior on their childhood experiences. What happened to your husband as a little boy may have been extremely difficult and perhaps even traumatic. However, that isn't an excuse for his abusive behavior toward his own children.

Stop being so understanding. Let him clearly know that his inappropriate behavior with your children will not be tolerated. He needs to stop making excuses and start changing his behavior. As a loving mom, how can you continue to expose your boys to this type of environment?

### Question:

I have two teenage daughters; the younger one is severely autistic. My oldest daughter has made it clear she wants to go away to college. I fear she is doing this to get away from her younger sister.

I've always told my oldest that family comes first. When her dad and I are no longer able to care for her younger sister, the responsibility will be hers. She has resented the extra responsibilities over the years. Am I wrong to expect her to care for her younger sister?

### Answer:

There is no way you can require your older daughter to take on such a significant responsibility. Contact social service agencies and begin to review what community options are available for your autistic daughter when you are no longer able to provide care.

Once you have made such arrangements, speak with your older daughter regarding your plans. It will be her decision whether she feels she can take on some of those responsibilities.

While your intent of having family members care for your youngest child is laudable, your expectations may have the effect of pushing your older daughter away from her family. Respect your daughter's decision even if it goes against your personal preference and work hard to maintain that relationship.

**Question:**

My 13 year old son desperately needs psychological help. I've set an appointment for a therapist, but he has adamantly refused to go. Should I bring him anyway?

**Answer:**

Bring him to the first session and discuss with the therapist the best way to approach this situation. Here's what I tell reluctant youngsters when they enter my office. Make a good faith effort to cooperate for three sessions. If at the end of that time you are still adamantly refusing therapy, we won't require you to attend. However, I do warn these teens that decisions about them would then be made without their input. Over the years, I've had very few youngsters refuse to attend therapy.

**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](http://www.childrensdayton.org/ramey).**