

Outlook on Lifestyle

DEAR MEG



Meg Whitcomb

Old boyfriend haunts woman

DEAR MEG — I'm married to a wonderful guy, but I miss my high school boyfriend, Brian. It's been five years since we were together, but I can't get him off my mind. Sometimes I feel I'm possessed by him, even though he treated me very badly. I drive by his house and I'm tempted to call him. I don't because he might come on to me and the temptation would be too great. How can I get Brian off my mind? — TORN UP, DETROIT

DEAR TORN — "For of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest

are these: 'It might have been!' The poet John Whittier spoke about those "what if" fantasies we all have about past choices. In fact, being able to imagine the other courses our lives could have taken, for better or for worse, is important in helping us make wise decisions in the future.

That's the good news. The bad news is that when we zero in on the choices we no longer have, it prevents us from dealing with the here and now. You could be fantasizing about Brian in order to avoid the real problems in your marriage. You need to practice some mental discipline to get your head out of the past and into the present.

DEAR MEG — Our 7-year-old daughter, Laura, is having problems in school. She gets good marks, but the teacher says she doesn't listen or follow directions. It seems she gets out of her seat, wanders around the classroom and looks at the other children's papers.

When I question Laura, she says she gets up because the teacher doesn't always come to help when she raises her hand. I know Laura isn't the only child in the classroom, but she is young.

The teacher told me that Laura wants adult attention. I help her at home as much as I can, but I don't have a lot of patience. My sister suggested a tutor, but we can't afford one. — MOM, BERGEN, N.J.

DEAR MOM — Parenthood is an acquired skill, and some people take to it more readily than others. Patience is a prime requisite, and your lack of it on the home front is probably being reflected in Laura's performance at school. You could develop a better understanding of what to expect from Laura and how to meet her needs by taking a course on early childhood development at your local community college or a nearby university.

Laura's short attention span and demanding behavior could also be a result of emotional immaturity, boredom due to an extremely high IQ or both. Consult with her teacher about giving Laura an intelligence test. This could indicate whether she should be in a class for gifted children or else repeat a year so she isn't too young for her grade.

DEAR MEG — I need an opinion, but I'm afraid to discuss this with anybody. Last night I made love with a man I'm really crazy about from 8 p.m. until 1 in the morning. Now I'm feeling guilty for indulging myself in such pleasure.

I'm a young divorced woman, and I've been involved with two other men besides my former husband. But it was never like this. Lovemaking was OK, but it didn't take so much time and offer such wild pleasures. Do you think there's something strange about my boyfriend and me carrying on for so many hours? — STRICTLY ANONYMOUS, MIAMI, FLA.

DEAR ANON — Not at all. You may have had little sexual satisfaction toward the end of your failing marriage. A strong surge of interest in lovemaking after your divorce — especially with someone who involves you emotionally and turns you on sexually — is entirely normal and nothing to feel guilty about.

The time to start worrying is if you come to rely on the sex act alone as a cure for loneliness, feelings of inadequacy or shallow emotional commitments. Relax and enjoy!

Feel left out? Meg's booklet "How To Be Popular" will help get you back in the swim. Send \$1 to DEAR MEG, in care of this newspaper, P.O. Box 91428, Cleveland, OH 44101-3428.

Write to Meg care of this newspaper. Meg can only answer letters that contain a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Questions of general interest will be discussed in future columns.

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DR. GOTT



Peter Gott, M.D.

Artificial limb is worthwhile

DEAR DR. GOTT — I'm female, 27. I lost my left leg above the knee five years ago. Now I'm thinking about using an artificial limb. The stump has shrunken in size, so that it is now smaller than my other thigh. Will this make a difference in getting a well-fitting prosthesis?

DEAR READER — Yes and no. The thigh on your damaged side has atrophied (shrunken) because the muscles have not been used as much as the muscles on your good side. A prosthesis can certainly be fitted to your stump. However, over time, as you use your damaged leg, your thigh muscles will grow in strength and bulk. Therefore, you probably will need to have the prosthetic cup adapted every few months to the increasing size of your stump.

I advise you to go ahead and be fitted with an artificial leg. Such a device will give you much more mobility and independence. Obviously, you will need close medical supervision and therapy from physical therapists. These professionals can advise and guide you in picking prostheses that are comfortable for you at each stage of your development.

DEAR DR. GOTT — I am diabetic. Recently I started eating a cereal sweetened with malted barley. My doctor told me that he frankly didn't know whether malted barley would be safe for me to consume. What do you think?

DEAR READER — Malted barley, taken in moderation, poses no health

hazards for diabetics who must avoid sugar. Have your blood sugar checked periodically to make sure that your metabolic balance is satisfactory.

DEAR DR. GOTT — I am an 18-year-old lesbian. Is there a drug or operation available to stop my menstrual cycles?

DEAR READER — Menstrual cycles can be stopped by a variety of drugs and by surgery, especially hysterectomy. However, by taking this approach, you may be limiting your options. For example, surgery is permanent and will prevent you from becoming pregnant should your sexual orientation ever change.

Before you try to alter your menses, I suggest that you consider counseling. Menstruation poses problems for some women. However, your desire to stop menstruating isn't based on discomfort or pain, but suggests that you need help in accepting yourself as a physiological woman, regardless of your sexual preference.

If you do not choose this alternative, see a gynecologist for advice as to the least dangerous method to stop menstruating.

DEAR DR. GOTT — My father recently died of primary amyloidosis at age 56. He had symptoms of manic depression for 15 years. The last two years, he also showed very mild symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. Is there any connection between these

diseases?

DEAR READER — Amyloidosis is a chronic disease of unknown cause that is characterized by deposits, in various organs, of a waxy starchy protein called amyloid. The condition often occurs in association with bone tumors, tuberculosis, rheumatoid arthritis and bowel inflammation. Amyloidosis can affect skin, muscle, lungs, heart and liver; it is especially common in kidneys.

As the amyloid deposits increase in size and number, they affect organ functioning. Heroic procedures, such as kidney transplants, may have to be performed to maintain life. At present, there is no specific treatment for amyloidosis, other than therapy

for the disease with which it is associated.

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