

DEAR MEG



Meg Whitcomb

Stay-at-home dad can't tame tot

By Meg Whitcomb

DEAR MEG — I am the father of a 2½-year-old son. My wife has a temporary job, so I'm what you might call "Mr. Mom."

My problem is typical: My son just doesn't listen to me. Hollering and spanking don't seem to do the trick. And explaining things calmly (believe me, I try) doesn't work either. Yesterday he grabbed the cat's litter box and threw it all over the kitchen. It's impossible to keep the place clean.

My wife has five more weeks to go on her special project. I don't want her to worry, so I always tell her ev-

erything's OK. But the truth is, my days are a living hell. — DESTROYED, NEW YORK, N.Y.

DEAR DESTROYED — Here's what you do: Forget about cleaning house, and concentrate instead on your little destroyer. A 2½-year-old needs constant supervision, you can't leave him alone for an instant.

Catch up on the cleaning during nap time (if you're not catching up on your sleep), or just leave it. I doubt you're fooling your wife, so why not level with her? She might even have some child-care shortcuts up her sleeve! Two heads are better than one.

DEAR MEG — I've been going with Kevin for a year now, and we're intimate. At first he took me everywhere with him, but now he's changed.

He says he wants time to himself so he can be with his friends, but it turns out his friends are all female. This wouldn't be so bad if he hadn't told me he was working on the night I ran into him in a restaurant with three women.

Later I confronted him about it. He

admitted he'd cheated on me once, but swore he would never do it again. I still love him, and he says he loves me. But his cheating makes me wonder if he really does.

Do you think I should forget about his past and just work on our future? Or should I get out before Kevin has another chance to hurt me? I'm 22, and he's 30. — HURT, WILMINGTON, DEL.

DEAR HURT — Get out while the getting's still good. Working on a future together could be a waste of time. Chances are Kevin will simply repeat the cheating pattern he's already established, only more so. Who needs that?

If you can't (or won't) learn from his past, your future is almost sure to include more encounters of an absurd kind — his cheating, your catching him, his cajoling, your capitulating. Life is too short!

DEAR MEG — I think my mother loves my brother more than she loves me. I'm 12, he's 13. Here are some examples:

If I bug Buddy, Mom hits me. But when Buddy bugs me, she says, "He's only playing around." If Buddy loses something, Mom replaces it; if I lose something, she says, "That's your problem."

Neither of us talks back often, but when I do, I get slapped. If Buddy talks back, Mom ignores it.

At Christmas, he gets more presents than I do.

I feel so unloved. What should I do? — LUCY, HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.

DEAR LUCY — Even the best parents sometimes seem to favor one child over another, or show their love in ways that youngsters find unfair. Some parents actually do have favorites, though they may not know why. It often has to do with the treatment they received as children.

In any case, you should pick a quiet time — not in the middle of an argument — to talk alone with your mother about your feelings. She truly may not be aware of how unloved you feel.

Sharing your hurt with her may open her eyes. If things don't improve, confide in another adult you trust. Feeling unloved when you're young can leave painful scars, even after you're grown up. I'm sure Mom wouldn't want that to happen.

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