

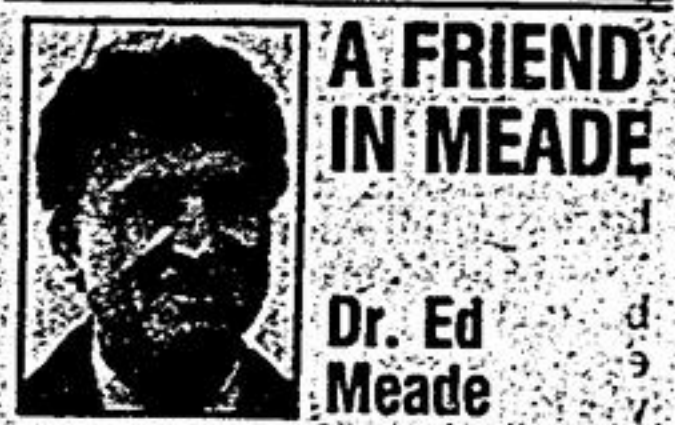


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Relationship is strained by mother-in-law

Dr. Ed Meade is a registered psychologist and director of the Markham-Stouffville Family Life Centre. In this column, he answers questions from readers who remain anonymous.



A FRIEND IN MEADE
Dr. Ed Meade

Q. Is it healthy for a married man to have to call his mother three or four times a day and sometimes more? My husband talks to his mother for at least an hour every day. Often I hear from her about the major events in his life, like the time he received a promotion. A. All things being equal, it is a healthy thing to talk to one's mother. In the situation you are describing however, your husband seems to be inviting his mother into his life in a way which appears to shut you out. You do not mention what invitations you are giving to your husband and in what way your relationship developed so that you are experiencing this exclusion.

Nor do you mention in what ways your own fulfillment is being jeopardized by your husband's communication with his mother, other than something important about his job is being relayed to you by her.

The situation only becomes a problem depending on one's own perception of the experience. Especially, for instance, if you don't like his mother.

On one hand, if you really like your mother-in-law, this could be seen as a benefit. If you dislike her, however, a problem results.

Are you working to improve your own communication with your husband? Are you failing to assert yourself in any way? Are you benefiting, even covertly, in some way by your husband taking so many of his concerns to his mother?

Perhaps it lets you off the hook in terms of helping him manage his life.

The type of situation you describe is complex and requires more clarification before any written hypothesis could be formed.

Should this become an ongoing difficulty for you, or if you feel the behavior is increasing and your husband is spending more time with his mother and less with you — and you want to spend more time with him — it would make sense to talk this over with a person trained in marital therapy.

Dr. Meade welcomes your questions. If your response is published, name and identity, if included will be withheld. Questions may be directed to the Markham-Stouffville Family Life Centre, 113 Main St., Markham.

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