

Friends' children aggravate couple

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.

Q. We have friends that are really wonderful company. The two couples (my husband and I and the two of them) have a wonderful time together, but their children are a different matter.

Their two children (ages 6 and 2½) are brats. They are poorly behaved, loud, damage my son's toys and disrupt our entire household when they visit. I refuse to invite them any more.

I almost hate going to their house for fear that I am subjected to these children for very long. The parents often apologize for their kids' behavior or just simply ignore them, as they are a handful.

We have refused to go on trips with these friends because they insist on bringing their children. Do I have the right to discipline these children, if and when they come over? Should I even try to explain to this couple why we don't want to do family things together?

A. As to your first question, the answer is yes. You could be firm in your boundaries of discipline, especially when it pertains to the rules of your own home.

Do you have a place where these children could play, which would contain their disruptive behavior?

This scenario is somewhat like marrying for the second time to someone who already has children from a previous marriage. The kids come with the person and kids come with couple friendships.

You must then share in the authority when these children are in your home. In your own home set the rules and make them quite clear at the start of any visit, with any child. When you are in their home it is not quite as simple.

There, you may assert yourself on issues of personal comfort and space. There you could simply state very assertively, "This kid is bugging me, will you please assure me that my personal space won't be violated."



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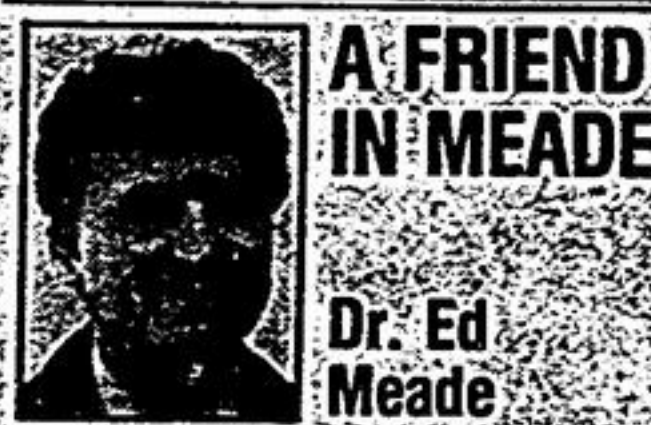
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A FRIEND IN MEADE

Dr. Ed Meade

If your personal space is not being protected, then your issue is really with the parents.

You need to assert yourself and let your friends know that you are being walked on and you do not intend to let this continue.

Are you too nice? Is perhaps your friendship pseudo-mutual? By confronting your friends you may lessen the harmony, but be free from the annoyance you have shared with me.

Dr. Meade welcomes your questions. If your response is published, name and identity will be withheld. Questions should be directed to the Markham Stouffville Family Life Centre, 5871 Hwy. 7 E. Markham.

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