

# Adviser

## FATHER KNOWS BEST

ROSS BRUNDRETT HELPS YOU SOLVE SOME IMAGINED, YET TRICKY, FAMILY PROBLEMS  
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**Q** I'm approaching middle-age and have found myself working harder and enjoying it less and I am #%^@ fed up. When I was at the \$%^# top of my #%^\$ game everyone was patting me on the \$%^# back and I was belittling people to my heart's content and the ladies loved it. But since I've taken a few hits from mistresses and critics, among others, people have been lining up to give me a #%^\$%\$ kicking. About the only ones who haven't had a crack are the wife and kids. I've tried using clever banter and insulting people, especially women, but that doesn't seem to work any more. I don't understand what's going on. I'm bloody talented and a tremendous bloke, and I just want my old life back. You know, when I could get away with murder.

**Gordon**

**A** Well, Gordy, I guess you've learnt the hard way that the good times never last, not even for tactless, womanising, puffed-up bullies like yourself. Perhaps now you can reflect on what you have lost and what remains. It sounds like you still have a family, somehow, and you still have gainful employment. And your health. Sigh. Really the only downside from where I'm sitting is that it appears you still have an ego with the dimensions of an over-sized melon.

**Q** Last year my father-in-law died and my wife has been spending more and more time at her mother's. Naturally she is worried about her being on her own because she is in her late 70s and has started to act strangely — if you call tying an apron over her head and telling people she is Mother Theresa acting strange. Anyway, she has been dropping hints about having her stay with us even though there's not really enough room. She's even suggested we take out a loan and build an extra bedroom. But it's not really the answer because ... because she's a crazy old lady and I don't want her living with us.

**Stormin' Norman**

**A** Norm, can I start off by saying nicely put? Just don't be tempted to use such terms if you ever feel compelled to convey your thoughts to the missus. In these situations it usually pays to be proactive. If the old bird can't be considered safe in her own house, seek out nursing-home options or suggest to your wife you might as well extend the mortgage and build another room for your folks. That might just change her thinking. If not, surely there are other members of her family you can shame into taking in the buzzard. Oh, and the only snag with this plan is that your kids might adopt a similar strategy when you become a doddering old coot. But you're OK with that, eh Norm

**Q** I've been tremendously successful in life and been able to retire young. But I miss the thrill of life on the road, working up a sweat, so I'm planning to make a bit of a comeback. The trouble is some people think I am making a big mistake and think I should sit back in my rocker and let the younger set have their time in the spotlight. Am I being selfish? Should I act my age? Does black really make you look thinner?

**Johnny (sorry, Jack) of Eltham**

**A** Just so you know, Jack, advice column etiquette usually prescribes only one question a letter, but I will let it slide this time. There are plenty of examples of people who make comebacks because they can't cope with the quiet life and I say, if it feels right, do it. Then again there's a lot to be said about the adage that there's no fool like an old fool. But if you always take the safe option, you end up with a life full of regret. I think you already knew that, though, didn't you, Jack? So my advice would be to wear predominantly black but offset with a white shirt. And if you have really let yourself go, maybe a man-girdle.

**“THERE'S A LOT TO BE SAID ABOUT THE ADAGE THAT THERE'S NO FOOL LIKE AN OLD FOOL”**

## \* RELATIONSHIPS

# Second wives' club

A close bond has been formed by two women dealing with tough times together

WORDS **MARIANNE BETTS** PICTURE **STUART MILLIGAN**

**S**ISTERS Colette Grigg and Helen McLennan have not always seen eye to eye, but mirrored lives brought them closer. Both married men who already had children from a previous marriage, so they joke about being the second wives' club, and now they've even gone into business together.

### Colette Grigg, 39

"Helen and I joke we are the second wives' club. We've both married men who already had children from their first marriages. Helen is my confidante and my best friend, but it hasn't always been that way. Growing up, even though she's only 14 months older, we were very different. I seriously couldn't understand her.

"We shared a bedroom. I was the goody-two-shoes and I remember Helen coming in the window at night. I locked it, so she couldn't get in. We had a real love/hate relationship.

"We grew up in a Catholic family in Donald, small-town Victoria, with three older brothers. Mum was a midwife and Dad an electrician.

"I left home at 17 and studied marine biology at university in Warrnambool, then moved to Sydney. I lived overseas for two years, then, jobless, I returned to Victoria. All of this time Helen and I had only sporadic contact.

"She was in South Gippsland, and her marriage was breaking down. I went to stay with her. I was there when Helen's husband just packed up and left. I had to ring Helen and say he's gone.

"That's when we became closer.

We realised we did have some similarities that we hadn't picked up on when we were growing up.

"I moved back to Sydney, working in the environmental sector, which I'm passionate about. A couple of years later I met my future husband, John.

"When I first saw him it wasn't love at first sight, but something in my head said, 'You have to talk to that man', so I did. We were both at the Royal Easter Show for work, and I just started chatting to him, and he was very easy to talk to.

"We were there five days straight, and we got to know each other. I learnt all about the breakdown of his marriage. It'd only been a matter of weeks since he'd left his wife.

"He then went to Bali for a month. I got in contact with him when he got back, and it was all on. His daughter, Emily, was three then, and she lived with her mother in Port Macquarie.

"It was all about his daughter in the beginning, which made it hard to build a relationship. Where do I fit in this whole thing? But we worked through that. We got married, and when Emily was 10, her mother moved overseas,

leaving her with us.

"I was pregnant with our first child, Lachlan, at the time. So we went from two to four. It was a big change.

"Helen and I have found our husbands' ex-wives challenging. They've played games and tried to plant seeds to break up our families, and they've done that through the children.

"We've also had to get our husbands to understand that their relationship with their children from their previous marriages shouldn't be guilt-based. They treat them differently from how they treat the children in our relationship, as if they have to protect them more.

"Soon after our daughter, Alanna, was born, Helen and I started our business, the children's clothing label Keiki Designs. I'm the designer and Helen looks after the business side of things.

"It's Australian-made and stylish but functional. We design it so the pants can be long one season and three-quarters the next as the children grow, and the same goes for dresses — they become tops.

"We supply 35 boutiques in Australia and New Zealand and sell at boutique markets.

"The business has brought us even closer. We see each other monthly — before we'd go six months — and we talk two or three times a day."

### Helen McLennan, 41

"My husband left me. It was so abrupt. It was, 'Well, I don't love you anyway'.

"Colette was a great support. She helped with the hairdressing salon I'd started in Foster, around the house and with my then two-year-old daughter, Elsie. She left just as she came, when the time was right.

"I had met my first husband when I was 19 and I was married by 21. After living in Melbourne with him for a couple of years, we moved to South Gippsland to a dairy farm.

"I spent four years on my own. Then I met Ian, my current husband, out on the town one night. He's from Melbourne and a musician with the air force.

"He had an eight-year-old son and a five-year-old daughter, and Elsie was five, so the girls were the same age. He'd been separated for eight months.

"I'd never considered a partner with children, but I thought it could work.

"I was quite naive, expecting that his children would just accept me. It's not easy being a step-parent. You have to be careful about what you say to your step-children and it's a bond you don't naturally have.

"The two girls have always had a great relationship, just like sisters, and they're 16 now.

## PILLOW TALK

LYNDA CARLYLE ANSWERS YOUR SEX, LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS QUESTIONS  
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**Q** MY PARTNER is finding it difficult to "go the distance". I love him, but it is proving frustrating. What can we do?

**A** Reality check: for about 52 per cent of men, game time lasts three to five minutes. In interviews with more than 10,000 men, Kinsey found an average of two minutes. Acceptable in the 1950s but not now. Women demand pleasure.

We have created unrealistic expectations but feel an entitlement to sexual mastery. Not everyone will play A-grade. For most people, it takes a while to become good at sex. We're hopeful we'll bag 10 on debut, but the reality is most of us will get a few touches and walk away wondering if we were in the right position.

The automatic decision-making that helps you decide in the heat of the moment whether to kick or handpass

usually comes later — with awareness, confidence and experience.

Why do we expect to have control and precision automatically with sex when we have to earn it with hours of practise in other things?

I'm not saying it's not frustrating for a woman when the final siren goes and you're just warming up — it is!

But seven out of 10 women won't hear the roar of the crowd without adequate "finessing" outside the main corridor. Lasting longer alone isn't going to change that much.

Investigate solutions together. Books, internet and regular practise can give clues to success. See a professional for some specialist skills coaching if you're having difficulty. My point is be kind; support and assist. Confidence and belief play a huge role.

With all things sexual, weigh your words carefully to bolster, not erode confidence.

**“FOR 52 PER CENT OF MEN, GAME TIME LASTS THREE TO FIVE MINUTES”**