

Adviser

FATHER KNOWS BEST

ROSS BRUNDRETT TAKES A STICK TO A DOG OF A RELATIONSHIP PROBLEM

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Q About two years ago my wife bought a puppy, a Pekingese-poodle cross, to keep her company after she retired. I was fine with the idea at first, though it took an instant disliking to me. Now she makes me walk the yapping mongrel around the block every night so we can bond and everyone has a big laugh because I weigh 120kg and this thing is about the size of a large ball of wool. It is always under my feet and occasionally I get angry and stick it in the sock drawer. Now she has banned me from the marital bed because Felicia (the dog) sleeps there too and she is worried I will crush it. Just give me the chance!

Barry, Brunswick

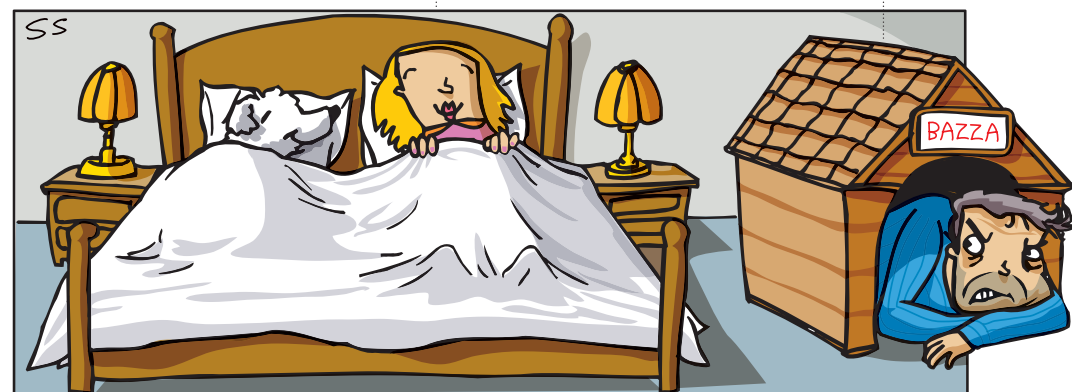
A Whoa there, Baz, the hostility is dripping off the page. The worst thing you can do right now is take out your frustration on the little mutt. Instead, get another agent to do your dirty work for you. Go along with the plan and say to your wife that because it's lonely in the spare room, you are also going to take in a pet dog. Get yourself a bull mastiff or a doberman. That should get rid of the problem before Felicia can say woof.

Q Rcntly me prnts crckd th sds cos i flunkd me skl xams. Thy startd blmn me 4 evrythng n z i wd looz me mobl phon. I wz rofl (rolling on the floor laughing) bt thy wrnt jkng n tht juz mde em madda n now thr banin me phon fr a hol mnth. Thy don undastnd wot ths wd do to me. Hlp. C4N (Ciao For Now)

Text teen, Templestowe

A Guess what? I don't understand either. In fact, I couldn't understand a gibberish word you texted until someone here deciphered your desperate plea for help. First, if you texted your English exam it's no wonder you failed. And as for not having a mobile phone for a month, get over it. Mobile phones are not covered in the Geneva Convention. They are a privilege, not a necessity. Use your mobile phone-free time wisely. Learn new skills, like writing proper sentences. Perhaps even learn other things that seem to elude the youth of today, like how to tell the time on an actual clock, you know, with a big hand and a little hand.

“ IF YOU TEXTED YOUR ENGLISH EXAM IT'S NO WONDER YOU FAILED



PILLOW TALK

LYNDA CARLYLE ANSWERS YOUR SEX, LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS QUESTIONS

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Q It seems my boyfriend only wants sex when he initiates it. If I flirt or take the lead he makes excuses. Why does he do this?

A It's a myth that all men are ready for sex, 24 hours a day. Some have definite ideas about gender roles and find an assertive woman aggressive. It may create pressure to perform. For men who have experienced sexual abuse, feeling in control can be vital. Some men can't combine love and sex, also known as the Madonna/Whore syndrome. They don't subscribe to the belief "a lady in public and a seductress in the bedroom". They want a goddess at home and look elsewhere to satisfy their wild side. See a professional if this rings true. It may be something much simpler, such as bad timing. If you initiate when he is heavily into his favourite show, watching the footy or cricket,

or when he has an urgent report to finish, sex will be a no go. How do you express your desire? Are you expecting him to be a mind-reader? "Do you want to come to bed" or "Are you tired tonight?" may not send a clear enough message. If it feels unromantic to blatantly ask, work out a signal so that it's obvious sex is what you want. If you feel like your man is a moving target, talk to him. He may have no idea how you feel. Explain what you want to alter, rather than focusing on your discontent. Talk about tomorrow, rather than yesterday and suggest positive changes. Ask what would make sex more appealing. It could be as simple as not initiating so late if he has to get up early, making sure the kids are asleep and the dog's been put to bed, or making sure you've had a shower and brushed your teeth. He may just need time to relax first. Talk tactics so you can start things off in the right way.

RELATIONSHIPS

Singularly successful

Coping as a single parent opened a world of opportunity for Christina Andrews, whose husband left her with four children

PICTURES MANUELA CIFRA

WHEN my husband left me, our children were aged between two and 10. I was a stay-at-home mother. He went to South Africa to build up a business. It was supposed to be for two years, so we thought it'd be fine. He'd send money and I'd have the kids, but it didn't quite work out that way. He'd be away three, four months at a time, and then come back for a week. I started working from day one because I didn't know if his business was going to succeed or what sort of money was going to come in.

I started in sales for Optus, but after 18 months I left and started a business as a telecommunications broker with mobile phones, coming up with the best plans for corporates. It was very successful, it grew very quickly. It was three or four years before I realised our marriage was not working any more, that he was not going to come back.

We'd both moved on and everything had changed. We'd grown apart. I had become very independent and I realised we were not going to be together. It became a mutual thing. He then met someone else and now, 15 years later, he's still there. I'd married at 18, had my first child at 22 and I was 32 when he left.

It was difficult being on my own in the beginning - balancing my emotions, having time for the children and becoming the breadwinner. I was angry. I was a mess. My ego was bruised, but I wasn't heartbroken, I was over it. I was achieving things. I went through the "life's not fair, why me?" phase.

I had to try to balance when to leave work and go home to the kids, and weekends were sometimes taken up with work, which made me feel guilty.

My mother helped out picking up kids after school, and my eldest daughter took on a motherly role, making sure the kids did their homework.

It's a time when you reflect a lot. It's a time where you have to make a lot of decisions. It's a time where you have to turn around and say: "Am I going to sit here and wallow? For how long?"

It's fine to wallow, it's got to be

done. You have to go through the anger, and the "why me?", and all that anxiety and the emotions of "I'm a bad mother".

Unfortunately some people stay there and others, like myself, choose to move on.

Little things helped. I used to write down my thoughts and feelings, ugly hate letters. It was my way of venting. That way it's out of my system and doesn't have the same potency. It's an amazing tool. I did lots of courses. I was always learning and it helped me. I started to grow.

My focus then became my children and my time with them, so I started to leave work on time to spend time with the kids. We would always eat together and the

“ THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES AND BLESSINGS WHEN SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPENS

television would be off. We'd all talk about our day. Family values are very important.

I don't bag their father, I never have. He loves the children and I love the children. It took me until four years after he left to feel I could have a harmonious relationship with him, and I did that for their sake. It makes them a lot happier. He visits the kids every six months.

To my son, his father was always a hero, but as my daughters grew up they had abandonment issues. It was probably more prominent in their teenage years. I suggested they speak to their father, tell him exactly how they felt.

Two of the girls have done that and they have a fantastic relationship with him. They say they don't have to like what he did, but they understand where he was coming from at the time. The eldest has not done it yet, but I'm sure she'll get around to it.

I haven't had any relationships since my husband. It's not a regret, but it's maybe something I should have done a while ago. I have a great life, I have a lot of friends, but I haven't allowed myself because I was too focused