

For And About You

By Harriett Muhammad

DEAR HARRIETT: My problem is an emotional one which has its roots in my childhood. I came from a broken and very poor home. My parents were separated when I was two years old, and I am the youngest daughter of a family of three daughters and no sons. My father raised us three girls alone, having been deserted by my mother.

My father was a very independent man and demanded strict obedience without giving any incentive for obedience. At the age of fourteen years, I became involved with a married man of twenty-two years. I had two children by this man—one of whom died—a girl two years old, and a boy now seventeen years old.

At the age of 28 years, I became aware of my problem and I attended a two-year session with a psychiatrist. My basic problem is one of sex and promiscuity. It seems that I am always looking for the man that most suits my desires and ambitions in life. I will accept a man's word for what he says and blind myself into believing that he means this.

I know what I expect from a man, Harriett, but I do not understand why I will accept a man's word for what he is and hope that he does not change for the worst. However, my hopes are usually in vain and I discard this man and keep right on searching in the same manner . . . It seems to me, Harriett, that my most prosperous and progressive times are when I am struggling alone trying to build a life for myself and my now teenage son.

Deep within me the loneliness for the right mate still persists and it causes me a great deal of confusion. Please tell me what is the right thing for me to do . . .

Because of my recently acquired attitude of "don't care - what happens to me," I have started to smoke cigarettes again after a year of not smoking.

What can I do to reverse this attitude, because I sincerely DO care what happens to me and I desire to overcome all weaknesses. I want to do what is right but I just don't know what to do about my situation.

—CONFUSED

DEAR MRS. CONFUSED: You are a very intelligent woman — you know your problem, your weaknesses; and you're sincere about wanting to change the situation you're in. What you lack is self-discipline and willpower. Remember that in the final analysis YOU are the only one who can discipline YOU.

Your wanting the companionship of a mate is a very natural reaction. Your promiscuity is evidence of a spiritual vacuum. Religious laws weren't given you for the sake of cutting down your "pleasures." They are a source of strength to enable you to live a righteous life. Let them be your source of self-discipline.

You will be able to change your ways if you think about the image you are presenting to your teenage son. He's seventeen now—probably nobody's fool. What do you suppose he thinks about your behaviour? Don't you want to give him a better break in life than you had? I think you do.

If you are successful in disciplining yourself, you will stop looking for a man to satisfy your desires and start looking for the qualities in a man that make him the kind of a mate you can respect, obey and enjoy.

Something on your mind? Write and tell me about it.

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