

## The New York Times

### SOCIAL Q'S

# This Fancy Wedding Is Everything I Didn't Want for You

A reader taught her nephew how to be smart about money when he was a teenager. Now that he's an adult with cash and credit, he wants her to subsidize his very expensive nuptials. What?

By Philip Galanes

Nov. 22, 2018

*My nephew is 30. His parents died when he was 18, leaving him impoverished. Since then, I've provided financial guidance and emotional support. He was able to graduate from college debt free and has a good job. Against my advice, he used his savings for a down payment on a house I don't believe he can afford. He is now planning an expensive wedding to his fiancée, who has substantial student debt. He asked if I would pay for their rehearsal dinner. I was outraged and refused! I will attend the wedding, but I don't believe people should buy things they can't afford. Was I wrong?*

MARY

When we become parents (or surrogate parents, Mary), we do what we can to teach our kids the lessons we think will serve them best in life. In your case, it's pretty clear that drilling fiscal responsibility into your nephew was a key part of your relationship.

But the miserable injustice of having children is that there comes a point when we have to let them go, fully aware that they may commit every folly under the sun. I'm sure your nephew knows that you opposed his home purchase (and probably his wedding, too). A parent's job, though, also includes being as supportive as we can be, within the bounds of plausible authenticity.

You have no obligation to subsidize this wedding party. (It is probably obvious to every reader that a fancy dinner is just the sort of frippery for which you have no use.) But your nephew's marriage is a big deal, and you should celebrate it if you can. How about making a gift consistent with your sensible outlook: by paying down a small part of his mortgage, maybe, or his fiancée's student debt?



Christoph Niemann

## If You Want to Ruin This Wall, Fine

*My boyfriend and I are moving in together. He is wonderful, thoughtful and brilliant. Just one problem: He has the worst taste in decorating! His current place is filled with African masks and murals of hunters and gatherers. (I should mention that his mother's home is decorated similarly.) I prefer a more contemporary, less carnivorous vibe. But he's very defensive about his taste. How do we find common ground?*

**SAMANTHA**

Start by bringing down your snark level about your boyfriend's taste by 65 percent. (Who died and made you the queen of HGTV?) We are all entitled to live with the art and objects that make us happy. Personally, I love African masks. And though I can't quite picture these murals, I bet they beat not having a terrific boyfriend.

You, my friend, have an admirable penchant for rules that will undoubtedly irritate many of those in your social orbit. No need to be literal about this one. The swim-cap code is designed to prevent hair from clogging drains or floating annoyingly on the water's surface. By shaving his head, the man has taken himself out of the rule's reach (and undertaken a pretty big daily commitment). Let him swim in peace.

For help with your awkward situation, send a question to [SocialQ@nytimes.com](mailto:SocialQ@nytimes.com), to Philip Galanes on Facebook or [@SocialQPhilip](https://twitter.com/SocialQPhilip) on Twitter.

6.0k

**AITA for not paying for an equally extravagant wedding for my oldest daughter?**

Asshole

**CLOSE**

6.0k

Posted by

u/flightop

1 year ago

**AITA for not paying for an equally extravagant wedding for my oldest daughter?**

Asshole

We have two daughters, Jody who is 26 and Hanna who is 28.

Both of them are engaged to two wonderful men who we adore.

My wife and I have saved roughly \$50k for each daughter as a wedding fund. We aren't rich people so it took us years of being careful with our finances to help pay for half their college and this wedding fund.

We sat down with both my daughters separately to talk about their wedding plans. They did not know we had a fund for them. This was probably our first mistake.

Hanna immediately said she did not want a large wedding and would rather save money for a house deposit. She was going to do a courthouse wedding followed by a reception next year. So my wife and I agreed we would give her the wedding fund for that purpose. Again, we didn't communicate any of this with her. A huge mistake in hindsight.

Jody wanted a decent sized wedding. Something the fund would've covered.

My wife and I decided to pay for several of our family members from out of the country to attend. We knew it would be expensive but we knew we were only having one traditional wedding and we hadn't seen some close family close to 20 years.

Unfortunately, the costs started going out of control and we ended up taking \$15K out of Hanna's wedding fund to cover the difference. At the time, we felt ok doing this because the extra costs of the wedding were due to our decisions, not Jody's.

The wedding happened a few weeks ago and it was perfect.

The problem now is that Hanna is aware we paid for most of her sister's wedding. She isn't aware about the costs and that we had to use some of her wedding fund.

A week after her sister's wedding, she came to us and said she changed her mind after seeing how beautiful it was. That she too wants a wedding like that with all of our extended family.

My wife and I had to tell her there was no way we could pay for all the extras again because we thought it'd be a once in a lifetime situation. We told her we'd be giving her around \$35k for a house deposit and hosting her reception at our home.

Hanna had a complete meltdown and accused us of playing favorites. She left in tears.

She is now telling us she's too busy to meet for dinner or lunch when she used to drop by a few times a week.

This situation has now reached other members of our family who are chiming in.

This has been killing us. My wife told me we should just take the other \$25k-30k from our savings to make this smooth over.

A part of me agrees but a larger part of me is angry that we have to mess with our retirement just because Hanna changed her mind. And I know part of her decision change is because of the constant competition our daughters have had growing up.

AITA for thinking everything should stick to the original plan? My wife disagrees with me.

<https://www.seattlepi.com/lifestyle/advice/article/Carolyn-Hax-Grandma-berated-for-disciplining-14483138.php>

# Carolyn Hax: Grandma berated for disciplining grandkids

By CAROLYN HAX, SYNDICATED COLUMNIST Published 9:28 am PDT, Sunday, October 6, 2019



IMAGE 1 OF 146

Keep clicking or swiping for "Best children's books from the last 100 years"

X

Hi, Carolyn:

I have a question about an adult child, her husband, and two small children paying a two-week visit. I am still recovering from their appalling behavior and the damage done to some irreplaceable family heirlooms. My daughter seems to think they have the right to treat my home as a cheap motel, and I need to accept that children must not be constrained by teaching them not to use a velvet settee as a trampoline, etc. If I asked her child, gently, not to do that, I got an angry tirade about how I wasn't bonding properly with my grandchildren. I stopped asking. It was a nightmare.

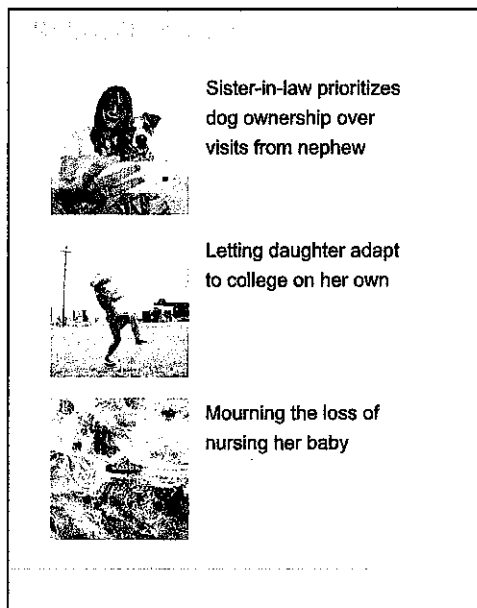
Now, I don't know how to tell her without harming our relationship th



I didn't bring her up to think this was appropriate, and I don't want her to feel I don't love her, but I am heartbroken at the lack of respect indicated by her entitled behavior.

**-- Shattered Mother**

I am too, on your behalf.



Entitlement is appalling.

And people do point their fingers at The Parents when they see it, so, thank you for the reminder that kids taught to be polite can still grow into adults who choose to be rude. Agency has its downsides.

Plus, you're about one step removed from what is basically a legal, commonplace hostage situation: The parents of their parents' grandkids know they have potentially cruel leverage in their control over access to these kids.

That makes people in your situation uniquely right to be concerned about harming the underlying relationship.

Sympathy doesn't help you with the dilemma of your next visit, alas.

But I hope you can start to address it by cutting its duration 75%. A two-week home visit involving two small children sounds ghastly: too long to sustain guest manners and too short for housemate manners to kick in.



## Sisterly exclusion makes one sis a horrible person



By Amy Dickinson

May 8, 2014

**Dear Amy:** Every fall, my sister, cousins and a cousin's sister-in-law have a weekend shopping excursion in our home city. We stay in a hotel, treat ourselves, shop for our children and go out for lunches and dinners. It is a great time to reconnect.

I have a sister "Wendy," who we do not invite. She is offended to the point of tears when she finds we have not invited her. My two sisters and I are very close in age, but Wendy hasn't been as close to this set of cousins as my sister and I have been through the years.

We are all married stay-at-home moms. Wendy is a divorced, working mom with one young child.

There are several reasons we do not include her. We know she doesn't have very much money for such an outing. She also does not have many of the same interests as we do. Her life is quite different from ours. We're not interested in what she has to talk about. She complains too much about her aches and pains, and claims to have some kind of neurological disease that some of us feel is more psychosomatic than real and which she uses to avoid getting up for church on Sundays.

She also complains about her ex-husband who left her for another woman, but everyone knows it takes "two to tango" and she is not without fault.

We're all very active churchgoers, while she only sporadically attends services. Plain and simple, she does not really fit in with us anymore.

She takes it very personally, and last year even came over to my home unannounced crying about it, which upset my children and caused my husband to threaten to call the police if she did not leave.

Now she barely speaks to me and has told our relatives that I am a horrible person (even though I've helped her).

How can we get her to understand that she should perhaps find another set of friends whose lives and interests align more closely with hers? — *Sad Sister*

**Dear Sad:** First, let's establish that I agree with your sister: You are a horrible person.

Obviously, you can do whatever you want and associate with — or exclude — whomever you want, but you don't get to do this and also blame the person you are excluding for not "fitting in."

The only way your sister would ever fit in would be for you to make room for her. You are unwilling to do that, and that is your choice. But her being upset is completely justified, and you'll just have to live with that.

Perhaps this is something you could ponder from your church pew, because despite your regular attendance, you don't seem to have learned much.

247 notes

Show



Debbel

120

1912



Dear Editor,

Twenty-two years ago I came to America with my wife and our four little children. We lived in Chicago nineteen years, and we have been in New York for three. I am not skilled in a trade, but I am a businessman, and all these years I've struggled because I never made a living. I know English, I am not lazy, I've tried everything and never succeeded.

When the children were young I had to appeal for aid to my wealthy family in Warsaw, and they helped me many times. Later, as the children grew up and began to earn money, it was easier, but I, with all my ability as a businessman, couldn't get myself settled in this country. In the city of Warsaw, where I lived before emigrating to America, there were times when things weren't too bad. In America, however, it always went badly and I haven't been able to adjust to the country.

Now, when my children are all married and in good positions, I got an idea that it might be good for me and my wife to go back to Warsaw. It is very hard to part with the children, but to live in poverty is also bad. It seems strange to me that I must go away from the free America in order to better my condition. But the chances for me are still better there. I ask your advice, and I thank you in advance.

Respectfully,  
The Unlucky One

ANSWER:

The advice to this letter writer is not to go back to Warsaw, because after so many years in this country, he would feel like a stranger there. He must understand he is no longer the same man he was twenty-two years ago, and the city of Warsaw is also not the same as it was in the past.

V  
an  
m  
m  
li  
te  
hi  
re  
fr  
me  
"Y  
he  
wh  
thi  
am  
I a  
AN  
Th  
Jew  
In  
his  
ful  
sole  
mig

myra

15

A BINTEL BRIEF

~~and her husband should go to the American Economic  
for Palestine at 17 East Forty-second Street, New  
York. There they can get the necessary information about the  
production of oranges in Palestine. Also they can tell this man  
whether he is suited for this kind of work.~~

~~But if the woman absolutely does not want to leave America,  
the man should consider her and should not break up his home.~~

1933

✱ Worthy Editor,

I am sure that the problem I'm writing about affects many Jewish homes. It deals with immigrant parents and their American-born children.

My parents, who have been readers of your paper for years, came from Europe. They have been here in this country over thirty years and were married twenty-eight years ago. They have five sons, and I am one of them. The oldest of us is twenty-seven and the youngest twenty-one.

We are all making a decent living. One of us works for the State Department. A second is a manager in a large store, two are in business, and the youngest is studying law. Our parents do not need our help because my father has a good job.

We, the five brothers, always speak English to each other. Our parents know English too, but they speak only Yiddish, not just among themselves but to us too, and even to our American friends who come to visit us. We beg them not to speak Yiddish in the presence of our friends, since they can speak English, but they don't want to. It's a sort of stubbornness on their part, and a great deal of quarreling goes on between our parents and ourselves because of it.

Marilyn

A BINTEL BRIEF

204

don't we

205

ny great men, active in American government,  
 ness, were brought up by immigrant parents  
 English correctly, but this did not keep them  
 successful careers. And these successful children of  
 ants are not ashamed of their fathers and mothers who  
 came to America from across the ocean. Just the opposite, they  
 take every opportunity to mention their parents and grandparents  
 with pride, and they stress the fact that these immigrants who  
 speak English with a Jewish accent have enriched their lives.

We feel that someone in your family should explain this to  
 your son and daughter-in-law, and they may see that they are  
 wrong. We also feel that at present you should visit your grand-  
 children often as before,  
 since [redacted] more harm than  
 their [redacted]

1967

\* Dear Editor,

I am the grandmother of a twenty-one-year-old girl, a girl  
 with all the finest qualities, and I am writing to you about our  
 problem with her.

Our granddaughter met a boy about six months ago, a boy a  
 few years older than she. They fell in love and are already  
 talking about marriage. The boy is very refined, from a good and  
 wealthy family. He will be graduating from college this year and  
 everything would be all right, if not for a "but."

Our son and daughter-in-law, the parents of the bride-to-be,  
 belong to a Reform Temple and brought up their daughter in  
 the same tradition. Her boy friend, however, comes from an Ortho-  
 dox family who conform strictly to the Jewish code. In his  
 home the phone is not answered on the Sabbath, and on Friday  
 night the electricity is controlled by an automatic clock.

To our granddaughter all this was new and strange, but when

she fell in love with the boy and began visiting his home, she came to love his way of life. It has gone so far that she does not ride on Saturday or eat meat at her own home because she knows her mother does not keep a *kosher* kitchen, and she even wants to reform her parents.

Since my husband and I are not Orthodox either, she has been complaining to us too. She would like her boy friend to be able to eat in her home, and this means that she wants her mother to start keeping a *kosher* kitchen.

There are many quarrels about this, because my daughter-in-law won't hear of making such changes. She is generally indifferent to Judaism, and she would prefer to break up the match. The girl is considering moving out of her home, because she doesn't want to eat non-*kosher* food.

The question is how to handle the situation, and I ask you to answer immediately.

Watching for your answer,  
Mrs. B.V.

ANSWER:

We feel that your granddaughter's boy friend's strict religious background need not be a hindrance to marriage. The main point is that he is a decent boy and that your granddaughter loves him. And her new belief in Orthodox Judaism should be considered a virtue, not a fault.

Your son, daughter-in-law and the entire family should not oppose the match. When your granddaughter marries the young man she'll be able to run her own home as she pleases, but she cannot and should not demand of her parents that they should change their way of life for her boy friend's sake. Your granddaughter and her parents, and even you, must restrain yourselves from giving each other advice on how to live. This is the time for tolerance, and you must all understand it.



**Jewish. Fearless. Since 1897.**

**LIFE »**

**BINTEL BRIEF**

## **I fed my guests non-kosher food. Do I have to tell them?**

By **Shira Telushkin**

October 21, 2020

*From its start in 1906, A Bintel Brief was a pillar of the Forward, helping generations of Jewish immigrants learn how to be American. Now our columnists are helping people navigate the complexities of being Jewish in 2020. Send questions to [bintel@forward.com](mailto:bintel@forward.com).*

---

**Dear Bintel,**

**I know this is bad. A few years ago, I moved to a new city right after college. I had been put in touch with some other young Jewish professionals in the area, and I invited a bunch of people over for a Friday night dinner. I knew one guest slightly (she was a few years above me in college) but everyone else was a friend-of-a-friend or a contact from the local minyan. I was trying to be social and ensconce myself in a new Jewish community!**

**About halfway through the meal I realized that I had cooked the rice with non-kosher chicken broth. I took the apartment over from a kosher friend, and there were some staples left in her kitchen that I used, like salt and spices and olive oil. There was a closed carton of chicken broth and I just instinctively used it.**



**Is there really a 'Koufax Curse' for  
Jews who play baseball on the...**

**I have NO IDEA why she had non-kosher chicken broth in her pantry! I've never asked because...I never told anyone. I know that was the wrong thing to do but I saw the broth, saw the table full of new friends who would now hate me forever — and I froze. I didn't want to ruin the meal. I couldn't imagine any other response. I hid that broth carton at the bottom of the trash and finished the meal in a panic.**

**It's been years. I now have friends, but I still cringe when I think of that night. What could I have done?**

**Signed,  
Host of Shame**

Dear Shame,

Oh no!! As one strictly vegetarian friend put it to me, this is the worst nightmare of people who hold by strict rules around what they will eat. For people who don't keep kosher, it can be hard to appreciate the depths of seriousness the practice holds for many people, and even Jews who keep kosher can have very different emotional relationships to the practice. For lots of kosher-keeping Jews, though certainly not all, the idea of eating non-kosher food (and non-kosher meat products especially) would be like discovering you had been served, and eaten, your childhood pet. It's a really big deal.

First, let's get the basics out of the way: You should have said something at the time. People were continuing to put non-kosher food into their mouths. A panicked "oh my God!" from the kitchen, with a fervent apology and explanation, would have done the trick. Yes, it would have ruined the meal, and, depending on the social graces of all invited, been really awkward, but it would have been the right thing to do.

Second, if it did plausibly seem like a total accident, then everyone would be jerks to blame you or hold it against you. Mistakes do happen.

- ADVERTISEMENT -

<sup>no</sup> But I understand why you froze. Precisely because the stakes were so high, the move to admit what you had done must have felt awful. To be honest, I don't know if in your shoes I would have followed my own advice to interrupt the meal, especially when I was just out of college and making new friends in a new city.

I wonder if you froze in part because you worried that the admission would change how people in the community perceived you. I mean, it's not inconceivable that people would, at minimum, have drawn conclusions about how comfortably they could trust your kitchen. That would have real social implications in a new town where hosting is a central mode of community building. If that calculation fed your decision to stay silent, it becomes a little more duplicitous — you traded others' kashrut for your own social standing. But also, I get it. And it sounds like you do too.

---

**Online hate and disinformation have long impacted Jewish communities and the health of democracy and civic life. What can be done? Join a panel of experts to discuss the narratives shaping this election season and how we can ensure every vote is counted. [Register here.](#)**

---

✓ So, what to do now? You didn't explicitly ask, but I don't think it makes sense to tell people after the fact. They ate unkosher rice years ago, and there is nothing they can do about it. I'm curious to hear if others disagree, and think there is value in telling folks now, but I think saying something at this point will only upset people without changing anything for the better.

I almost never say this, but I think you need to do teshuva. You let your desire to fit into a new community override your obligation to your guests and you acted pretty casually about others' kashrut. If you yourself keep kosher and thus decided to stop eating the rice, while letting others continue, then you also pretty dramatically put your own needs and comfort before other people's religious needs.

I would consider a few options: You could take on a practice to learn through the laws of kashrut for a set period of time, by reading through a serious book on kashrut or studying traditional sources; you could make a significant donation to a kosher soup kitchen or some organization that helps Jews keep kosher; or, if you do keep kosher, you could adopt an added stringency for some period of time to reinstill in yourself the seriousness of the practice for many Jews.

This might also be a case where it makes sense to reach out to a rabbi and see what they say. When the guests were at your table, this was an immediate social and moral issue. But once they left, it became a spiritual issue, and seeking spiritual guidance might be the right response.



(All of this assumes you want to take seriously the harm you did; if you’ve been beating yourself up about this for YEARS and need to let go of some of your guilt, then a rabbi might also help assuage those feelings. This was bad, but in a “don’t do it again” way, not a “carry this shame forever” kind of way.)

*Shira Telushkin lives in Brooklyn, where she writes on religion, fashion, and culture for a variety of publications. She is currently finishing a book on monastic intrigue in modern America. Got a question? Send it to [bintel@forward.com](mailto:bintel@forward.com).*

I fed my guests non-kosher food. Do I tell them?

**SPONSORED CONTENT**

**Top  
Tip  
Most  
Windows  
Computer  
Owners  
Ignore  
–  
Do  
It  
Today**  
  
By  
SecuritySavers  
If  
you  
own