

DEAR ABBY

Write to Dear Abby online at dearabby.com or by mail at P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069



Dear Abby: I've been dating a guy for five years. We were high school classmates and became close friends shortly after that. Abby, he's the man of my dreams. I've been in love with him since we were 16 years old. We married other people, but we are divorced now and we are together.

We are both 46. I want to get married and he knows it. We have discussed it — but every time I bring it up (and I always bring it up, he never does), he has an excuse. He says it's only a piece of paper, we've both already been married, I have some debt, etc.

I have a 19-year-old daughter, and he has two kids, 13 and 11. We all get along, even our exes. I am tired of being just "the girlfriend." This is not how I want to live the rest of my life. I have always wanted to be his wife.

He's a good man. He treats me great, is respectful, considerate and I love him so much. Must I suck it up and live and die as his girlfriend or leave because he doesn't want to get married? If I leave, I have no plans on dating or trying to marry anyone else. I'm fine alone. Please help.

— *Wants the Piece of Paper*

Dear Wants: As you have framed it, your boyfriend — whom you love very much — doesn't want to formalize the relationship, and if you break things off, you don't plan to become involved with anyone else. If you are asking me for magic words that will convince your marriage-phobic

boyfriend to make a permanent commitment, you are asking something that isn't possible. If he feels as strongly about you as you do him, he may come around one day, but there are no guarantees. And yes, you will have to "suck it up" if you're not prepared to leave, and while you're doing that, make the best of it.

Dear Abby: I've been dating a beautiful woman for a year now. We have fallen deeply in love. We have the kind of relationship that one can only dream of, and we couldn't be happier.

I've bought her some jewelry, including rings, to show her my love. She wears them, but she also wears jewelry, including rings, from past relationships. I told her this bothers me. She said those items don't have any sentimental value, she just likes them. I have no doubt she means that.

Should I overlook this and not let it bother me, or should I be more persistent?

— *Expression of Love*

Dear Expression: Your feelings are your feelings. Seeing your lady friend enjoy jewelry she received from other men bothers you. You have told her as much. While at one time the items were symbols of the affection her ex (exes?) had for her, to her they are now just jewelry. If you want to continue the relationship with her, place less importance on the baubles. They have nothing to do with you or the relationship you both enjoy now.

Brady

Continued from A5

Big deal. After victories at Washington, New Orleans (which beat the Bucs twice in the regulars season) and Green Bay, they head back home. To host a Super Bowl they are playing in.

"We were at 7-5 seven games ago, not feeling great," Brady explains. "We felt like we needed to find our rhythm. We played four games down the stretch the last quarter of the season, and then after that, it was just all bonus. The guys came through. Everyone stepped up to the challenge."

"It takes everybody, and everybody plays a role. I'm just so proud of this whole team and blessed to be a part of it."

The Chiefs are well aware of

Back-to-back club

Since 1966, seven NFL franchises have won consecutive Super Bowls, but no team has won three in a row.

- **Green Bay Packers** (1966–1967)
- **Miami Dolphins** (1972–1973)
- **Pittsburgh Steelers** (1974–1975 and 1978–1979)
- **San Francisco 49ers** (1988–1989)
- **Dallas Cowboys** (1992–1993)
- **Denver Broncos** (1997–1998)
- **New England Patriots** (2003–2004)

what Brady means in a championship chase. For those two decades when New England was dominating the AFC, Kansas City enviously watched. What the Chiefs witnessed then is what is playing out now: Brady as the centerpiece — and by far the most important piece — of a franchise.

He's stamped himself as the overriding reason the Patri-

ots were so good; look at them now without him. And look at what the Bucs have achieved already with him.

When Brady won those successive Super Bowls, he was only beginning to establish his championship pedigree. He hadn't won an MVP award; he now has three. Nor had he won Offensive Player of the Year; he now has two.

Olsen

Continued from A5

After 24 catches in 37 targets with one touchdown for the NFC West-champion Seahawks, winning it all remains the one career goal that eluded him.

"I try not to look back and have regrets. I have so much I am proud of over my career,"

Olsen wrote. "But as I look back on my career, I have two. I regret never reaching the top of the mountain. I regret walking off the field under the weight of confetti, but realizing our dream came up short."

He is a hero in Charlotte, North Carolina. Last month, the day after he missed his second game with a major foot injury, Olsen and his wife

Kara opened The HEARTest Yard Congenital Heart Center at Levine Children's Hospital in Charlotte.

He and Kara run his foundation based in Charlotte from his nine seasons playing for the Panthers through last year, Receptions For Research. Each spring the Olsens host The HEARTest Yard event and 5K race in Charlotte to raise

He hadn't set many league records of note, either.

Today, he is the most successful player in the NFL's modern era. Even when he throws interceptions on three consecutive series, which he did Sunday at Lambeau Field, he and his team still find ways to win.

That's what Mahomes and his magic must overcome, and the Chiefs are early three-point favorites to do so. They come from the stronger conference. They win even when they aren't at their best, as happened last week against Cleveland. They shrug off deficits the way Travis Kelce shrugs off defenders. They boast a confidence reminiscent of, well, the QB in Tampa.

And that guy is the most challenging obstacle to get past.

Kobe

Continued from A5

I planned to begin writing this column Friday. But Hank Aaron died. While searching for words that could attempt to honor the remarkable life of Hammerin' Hank, I thought about all the tributes to deceased sports figures I've written the past 12 months. I thought about all the tributes beyond sports I wished I had written: for Ruth Bader Ginsburg, John Lewis, Chadwick Boseman, Alex Trebek. I thought about teaming with my brother to write our grandparents' obituaries, the toughest of all assignments, and I thought about the ordinary people — the ones uncelebrated but essential to a community's fabric — we lost to COVID-19, a number that has surpassed 418,000 Americans.

I thought about George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and this entire wave of senseless death and racial injustice. I thought about the five people who died in the Capitol riot, particularly U.S. Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick, and the treacherous reasons for that conflict. I thought about how damaged and sick we are as a nation — because of the novel coronavirus, racism, delusion, dissension, isolation, heartache and pain — and for all that thinking, it was still an unfathomable experience.

Sometimes, it feels like Bryant died last week. Are we not in a similar emotional place? Every time the air seems breathable again, do we not brace for the next suffocating event? In a sense, our world has been stuck on idle for most of the past year. In another, it seldom has moved so consequentially.

"As we approach his one-year anniversary, it saddens our hearts to actually come to the realization that he's gone," Los Angeles Lakers all-star forward Anthony Davis said of Bryant. "I know I still have trouble with it. You still just can't believe it."

That helicopter crash in Calabasas, Calif., erected a signpost: Agony Ahead. For those who grieved Bryant, the tears transferred from tragedy to tragedy. For those who didn't, life found a way to break them down.

In his first speech as president last week, Joe Biden framed the tribulations well while imploring the country to unite. We are divided, but we're all dodging misery, a tenacious kind that has seeped into every facet of life. This bonds us, even if we don't acknowledge it.

"Folks, this is a time of testing," Biden said during the inauguration. "We face an attack on our democracy and on truth, a raging virus, growing inequity, the sting of systemic racism, a climate in crisis, America's role in the world. Any one of these will be enough to challenge us in profound ways. But the fact is, we face them all at once, representing this nation with one of the gravest responsibilities we've had. Now we're going to be tested. Are we going to step up? All of us? It's time for boldness,

for there is so much to do. And this is certain, I promise you: We will be judged, you and I, by how we resolve these cascading crises of our era."

Before these cascading crises escalated, we were already facing a difficult year, from wildfires in Australia to Donald Trump's first impeachment. Within 45 days of Bryant's death, the World Health Organization officially declared the coronavirus a pandemic. The long recovery continues, without regard to our fatigue or frustration.

In any other year, it would have been difficult to process the death of Bryant and his daughter, who seemed destined to become a star and add a new texture to the family's basketball legacy. It would have been

difficult to think about all that Kobe wanted to do, with his burgeoning media company, his commitment to uplifting women's athletics and his interest in reimagining youth sports. But if left to deal with just that loss, the public may have progressed toward closure. Instead, the process seems woefully incomplete.

This anniversary doesn't take us back to a heartbreaking memory. It reminds us that we remain in it, trapped under the emotional boulder, unable to escape.

"Man, it's a saying that time heals all," LeBron James told reporters Saturday night. "And as devastating and as tragic as it was and still is to all of us involved with it, only time. And it takes time. Everyone has their own grieving process."

awareness and funds for children with congenital heart disorders.

Their 8-year-old son T.J. was born with a congenital heart defect.

Their new center at Levine Children's Hospital, in conjunction with Atrium Health, has been eight years in the planning and funding by the Olsens.

Time has only given us new people to grieve and new obstacles to overcome. The process is more complicated than usual. There's no use predicting how long it will take.

The shock lingers, perhaps because we keep getting shocked. At the time, it felt like Bryant's death would shape the year. It proved to be a mere prelude to a barrage of complex suffering that defined the past 12 months and threatens all our futures in some way.

On Tuesday, one year since the fiery crash, we remember a celebrity and sigh again about his heart-wrenching demise. Then the harshest realization comes to the surface: The Kobe Bryant tragedy was a beginning, and no one can be certain when this period of misery will end.

YOUR HOROSCOPE *By Madalyn Aslan*

Stars show the kind of day you'll have

★★★★★ DYNAMIC | ★★★ POSITIVE | ★★ AVERAGE | ★★ SO-SO | ★ DIFFICULT

HAPPY BIRTHDAY FOR TUESDAY, JAN. 26, 2021: Bold, dramatic and confident, you go with everything you have got. Remain calm this year, and all will be well. By carefully planning out your campaign for 2021, you succeed tremendously. If single, some find it difficult to be intimate with you. Let your intentions be better known, and you'll find your committed partner. If attached, a loving, understanding but firm mate does wonders for you. TAURUS fits the bill.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★ Today, despite the work you have to do, promises focus on your domestic environment. Be receptive to changing home and family dynamics. It is a perfect time to repair and redecorate your home and surroundings. Tonight: A family discussion over dinner.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★ It is easy to get distracted at work today. There will be some conflicts between male and female energies or between home and business concerns. Ignore crosscurrents and interference, and focus on your true heart's desire. Tonight: A sibling could grow closer.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Balancing financial matters in order to acquire items you need and want will be important today. You can go on an online shopping expedition. Keep all receipts and compare prices, though. Tonight: Your ruler Mercury is going into retrograde and you might change your mind.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Today you will be powerful and effective. There is a new warmth and action that carries you forward. If angry feelings build, examine the consequences before you act. Protect yourself against the cold, and don't go overboard with exercise. Tonight: Feeling proud of yourself.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Seclusion helps you heal and get centered today. You'll experience a sense of aloneness. Appreciate the advantages of privacy and cherish the quiet times. Charitable acts and kindnesses you perform warm you with an inner glow in the cold winter. Tonight: Early bedtime-byes.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Today brings new loves and friendships. Your social circles are undergoing a catharsis, but the result is positive. Faith is an important factor in any project's success. Tonight: Reach out to an old work colleague with whom you haven't spoken in a long time.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★ Today finds you awash with ambition and longing. Enjoy what you have; don't let yourself be tormented by thoughts of greener pastures. Make a list of your many accomplishments and love yourself for each one of them. Tonight: Re-read your list.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Today brings eloquence. If you want to write or lecture to groups, proceed with the confidence that you will do well. Involve yourself in learning experiences. Your perspective broadens. It's easy to rise above worries and be optimistic. Tonight: Reach out to a foreign-born friend.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Today brings a curiosity about death's mysteries. There's a message of wisdom and comfort from the spirit realm. A sense of déjà vu prevails. Look at repeating patterns to understand the future. Give yourself extra rest. Tonight: A relaxing herbal soak in the tub.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★ Today illustrates the value of cooperation. Your partnership sector is highlighted. Others have plans and want to involve you. Respect the ideas and motives of co-workers. Be fair. Rules, regulations and justice are important guidelines to assure harmony in our crowded world. Tonight: Relax.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★ Always exercise your eyes if reading or doing other close work for long periods of time. Take breaks from glaring artificial light during the workday and walk in the full-spectrum daylight. Headaches induced by stress or diet can be a real health concern. Tonight: In recovery.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Relationships with children assume a new dimension, and you will express true love in new ways. Welcome a change of heart. A strong accent makes you rather secretive. Your inner life be-comes more active. Tonight: Comfort and joy with your nearest and dearest.

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