

Family Council

Editor's Note: The Family Council consists of a Judge, a psychiatrist, three clergymen, a newspaper editor, a women's editor and two writers. Each article is a summary of an actual case history. The Council reports on problems that have been dealt with by responsible agencies and counselors.

Mrs. Y.O. - He condones his sister's behavior toward their mother.

Peter L. - My sister doesn't have to keep taking that guff from Mother.

Mrs. Y.O. - I'm not really in this picture, and maybe that's why I can see it more clearly than Peter and his sister. I'm just their aunt by marriage.

I can't interfere too much, but I see Peter making a bad mistake. His mother, I admit, is a spirited little woman for all her 75 years. Evidently her daughter Ina couldn't stand her and there's been a complete estrangement for the past four years. Although Peter remains very attentive to their mother, he tells Ina she's doing the right thing.

I've lived a long time and I've yet to see anyone who can cut a mother out of her life and not suffer. I think later, when her mother is gone, Ina will have such terrible guilt feelings that she'll go to pieces.

Peter would do better to try to bring the two together again. The mother has many fine qualities and she would strain herself to "behave" with Ina if Peter set up a reunion. But instead he continues to provide fuel for Ina's beefs. This is dangerous.

Peter L. - My aunt only knows the situation from hearsay. I grow up with my sister and I know what's behind this. There's no question but that Mother played favorites and I was it. As a child I loved it, of course. But as a man, I realize what it did to my sister.

I know my sister has never been a happy person. Maybe part of her gloom comes from inside herself, but being with my mother was making her worse. During each visit they'd shout at each other and the tears would flow. It was I who told Ina she didn't have to subject herself to that torture any more. And, as Aunt Yolli said, I think Ina is perfectly justified.

I visit Mother regularly. She's sweet and decent to me, even more so since I've been contributing to her support. I think this separation is right. Mother had it coming to her for her treatment of Ina.

The Council: Here we have the testimony of two people more or less on the sidelines of a dismal slug-fest that isn't getting anywhere.

Mrs. O. is wise to be forcing Peter to examine his position as judge, arbitrator, mediator in family relations. This is a grave responsibility and, as a principal, Peter should disqualify himself if he wants to make certain he's pursuing the most wholesome course.

Can it be that Peter derives certain unhealthy satisfactions from the impasse between his sister and his mother? Ina's the bad child, and Peter's the good one, may run through his mind. And if he feels hostile toward his mother, perhaps he finds that Ina's vendetta is an undercover outlet for him, too. Unconsciously he may be glad to have his mother get what's "coming to her," as he puts it, while keeping his own hands clean.

No, Peter would be doing more of a kindness to Ina if he worked - alone or with his clergyman or doctor - toward a rapprochement with their mother. Nature puts certain links into our very fiber which bind a mother and child. And a deliberate renunciation wrecks some form of damage. Peter could spare Ina some of this by effecting a few polite hellos, a restrained handshake, maybe even a foregoing smile between the two.

Else he'll have Ina on his hands with belated remorse and perhaps recriminations against him for lulling her into an unhealthy "peace."

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Newport News, Va. - Neighbors provided C. R. Marshall with a genuine surprise when he was moving from one apartment to another.

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