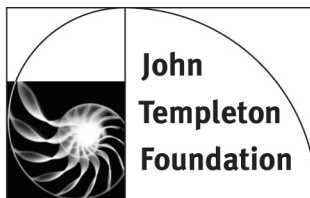


Down a Dark Abby

The Culture and Media Institute's analysis of Dear Abby's 2007 columns reveals that the world's leading advice columnist cannot be trusted to promote traditional sexual morality – but she can be trusted to promote moral relativism.

SPECIAL REPORT





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*The opinions expressed in this report are those of the
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John Templeton Foundation.*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Jeanne Phillips, the current writer of the “Dear Abby” column, is the leading authority figure among advice columnists. Her column runs in 1,400 newspapers worldwide and reaches 110 million readers daily -- nearly three times the daily news viewers of ABC, CBS and NBC combined.

Phillips enjoys a tremendous platform to promote her beliefs on everything from wedding etiquette to handling the crazy uncle in the attic.

The “Dear Abby” column has a reputation for dispensing solid, homespun wisdom, so most people assume Abby is a trustworthy source of traditional advice on all topics. However, a Culture and Media Institute analysis of Dear Abby columns from 2007 reveals that 30 percent of her columns address the topic of sex, and in 53 percent of those columns, Abby takes a distinctly non-traditional approach toward moral questions. Many of Abby's columns on sex could have been written by Dr. Ruth.

As many as 20 million of Abby's readers are under the age of 18. Millions of young men and women are forming their views on sex and relationships under the influence of a libertine advice columnist who is advancing anything but traditional values.

Major findings:

- **30 percent of Dear Abby's 2007 columns deal with sex.** That's 108 out of the 365 columns.
- **53 percent of Dear Abby's 2007 sex columns reject traditional morality** – the view that sex should be limited to marriages of one man and one woman.
- **Abby does not encourage unmarried adults to abstain from sex.** Fifty-four columns address sex between unmarried adults, and only one column suggests that sex should be preceded by marriage. Abby's advice to a woman who wanted to take a "friends with benefits" relationship (a sexual relationship between uncommitted friends) to a more meaningful level was to "stop asking for a commitment, and fill the time you're not with him with friends – and other dates should you meet someone you 'click' with." Abby did not tell the reader to cut off the "benefits." One column even accepted sex between cousins.
- **Abby almost never finds adultery to be wrong.** Thirty-six columns address infidelity. In only ten of these columns does Abby suggest breaking off an affair, or not getting into an affair in the first place. Only once does Abby flatly state that an affair is "wrong." At times Abby appears to condone adultery, even homosexual adultery. "Confused in Illinois" wrote Abby that she had no interest in intimate relations with her husband, but she is now involved in a "passionate sexual relationship" with a female friend. Abby told her to "look at the bright side. At least you now finally understand what has been missing [in her marriage]."
- **Abby fails to tell sexually active teens to stop having sex.** Twelve columns address teen sex, and Abby's greatest concerns are avoiding sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. Only three columns on teen sex suggest abstinence, and that was only for teens who were not yet sexually active. Her advice to a girl whose 12-year-old friend had engaged in sex was: "She needs to be seen by a doctor because she has become sexually active." Abby told another reader, "Sex before marriage may be 'wrong,' but if my mail is any indication, it's happening...." Abby is an advice columnist. She's the one person who should never condone harmful, immoral behavior simply because it's commonplace.
- **Homosexuality is perfectly acceptable to Abby.** Ten of Abby's 108 sex columns address homosexuality, and Abby never says homosexual behavior is morally wrong. Instead, she treats it as normal and ignores the well-documented, associated health risks. In one column, "Distressed Aunt" wrote to Abby asking whether she should "out" her nephew to his parents after finding an online profile that listed his sexual orientation as "bi." Abby told her, "If your nephew

were engaging in self-destructive behavior, I would say tell his parents. However, identifying one's sexual orientation doesn't fall into that category." On October 10, 2007 the Associated Press reported that Abby endorsed same-sex "marriage."

- **Abby adopts a permissive attitude toward a variety of odd sexual behaviors.** Twenty of Abby's sex columns address topics such as stripping, nudism and cross-dressing. Abby told a woman struggling to understand her significant other's desire to dress in women's clothing that it's a "quirk," and, "If I really cared about him, I think I'd ask to spend some time with his 'other self.' Then I'd make up my mind about whether I could accept the situation."

Conclusion

As evidenced by her massive audience, Dear Abby is regarded widely as a reliable authority on life's dilemmas. Yet her columns on sex reflect an unwillingness to support traditional, common-sense moral values that steer people away from destructive behavior and protect them from harmful situations. Dear Abby's advice on sexual matters cannot be trusted.

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BY COLLEEN RAEZLER

The Dear Abby column, founded by Pauline Phillips in 1956 and now written by her daughter Jeanne, has a reputation for prescribing sensible advice for many of life's dilemmas, both big and small. Readers generally assume Abby can be trusted to provide traditional advice on all topics.

However, a Culture and Media Institute analysis finds that Abby's advice on sexual issues frequently veers far away from traditional moral standards. Traditional morality teaches that sex should be limited to married, heterosexual couples, but Abby doesn't see it that way.

CMI analyzed all 365 Dear Abby columns published in 2007 and found that Abby routinely takes permissive stands on homosexuality and other forms of sexual behavior, premarital sex, and even sex between teenagers. To determine whether this permissive attitude was a recent development, CMI also reviewed the Dear Abby columns turned up by Nexis searches for articles related to sex and relationships. CMI also searched the Dear Abby Web site, which offers columns dating back to 1995, and reviewed the columns reprinted in the 1981 book *The Best of Dear Abby*. The research confirmed that the Dear Abby column has consistently espoused sexually "liberated" viewpoints for the past 30 years.

One hundred and eight of Dear Abby's 365 columns in 2007, or 30 percent, addressed topics related to sex. Of those 108 columns,

- More than half (58) rejected traditional morality.
- Ten addressed homosexuality, and never did Abby say homosexuality is morally wrong.
- Fifty-four addressed sex between unmarried adults, and only once did Abby say sex should be preceded by marriage.
- Twelve addressed teen sex, and only three columns advised abstinence
- Twenty addressed other sexual activities such as nudism, stripping and cross-dressing, and Abby's attitude was consistently permissive.

"Dear Abby" has a vast audience. Her column runs in 1,400 newspapers worldwide, seven days a week. Abby reaches 110 million readers daily, nearly three times the daily audience of ABC, CBS and NBC news shows combined. Abby's advice is highly sought after, as indicated by the 10,000 letters and emails she receives each week.

Organizations report increased interest when Abby mentions them in her column. The U.S. Consumer Information Center reported that in 2000, after Abby told readers about a free consumer survival kit for women, their Web site received 364,000 hits and their toll-free hotline fielded 48,000 calls. In 1992, Abby asked readers where they were when John F. Kennedy was shot, and more than 300,000 people answered.

What Others Say About Abby

In a 1997 article on Abby and her twin sister, Ann Landers, W. Patrick Cunningham wrote, "Their pithy dictums have seduced many into accepting the reasonableness of moral relativism; they have, over the past 40 years, helped legitimize the revolution in morality that has taken Western culture to the brink of extinction."

Operation Dear Abby, a program started during the Vietnam War in which Abby encouraged readers to write to servicemen and women during the holidays, is still going strong. Readers sent more than 375,000 emails in the first three weeks after the operation's Web site was launched in 2001.

Numbers tell the story. Abby has tremendous influence on American culture, which makes her views on sex important. A 1996 *Tulsa World* article celebrating Abby's 40-year reign as "the most widely syndicated columnist in the world," referred to Abby as "Abigail, the nightingale, of sweet-sounding advice."

But mixed into that "sweet-sounding advice" is a dose of cultural poison.

In a 1997 articleⁱ on Abby and her twin sister, Ann Landers, who advocated abortion and legalization of prostitution in the advice column she penned for 47 years until her death in 2002, W. Patrick Cunningham wrote, "Their pithy dictums have seduced many into accepting the reasonableness of moral relativism; they have, over the past 40 years, helped legitimize the revolution in morality that has taken Western culture to the brink of extinction." Cunningham holds Master's degrees in theology and education. He is a Catholic Deacon and the principal of Central Catholic High School in San Antonio, Texas.

How is Abby pushing moral relativism on an unsuspecting public? And what is this doing to the character of America?

Dear Abby, What Do You Think about Infidelity?

Fifty percent of the columns that addressed sex in 2007 touched on the issue of sex between unmarried adults. Thirty-six of those columns addressed infidelity. And in only 10 of the columns addressing infidelity did Abby suggest people stop cheating on their significant others or not to start. Only once did Abby flatly state, "It is wrong," and she never labeled marital infidelity as adultery.

When a woman wrote to Abby asking if she should agree to begin couples counseling with her married lover, consulting the same marriage counselor that her lover and his wife were seeing, Abby failed to say, "End the relationship with the married man." Instead she said, in a non-judgmental manner:

I think you should definitely have some sessions with the therapist who is counseling your lover and his wife. They could prove enlightening. I'm willing to bet the farm that the same issues that have caused him to cheat on her are the ones at the root of your problems with him. I'm not sure that "making this relationship work" would be in your best interests.

Or take the following two letters. "Confused in Illinois" explained to Abby that while she has no interest in intimate relations with her husband, she is now involved in a "passionate sexual relationship" with a female friend she turned to for comfort and advice. Abby told "Confused" to "look at the bright side. At least you finally understand what has been missing [in your marriage]."

"Considering It" from San Mateo, California wrote to Abby asking if he was "justified in taking on a lover on the side, discreetly, of course," because sex will improve health and his wife of 34 years has lost all interest in it. Abby told him to ask his wife, and said, "If it's all right with her, it's all right with me."

While neither response is an outright endorsement of adultery, Abby clearly implies that cheating on a spouse can be acceptable in certain situations and that adultery is not intrinsically wrong.

Dear Abby, Is it Okay for Teenagers to Have Sex?

Dear Abby for decades has accepted teenage sex as merely a fact of life. In the book, *The Best of Dear Abby*, released in 1981, she wrote:

I am not in favor of premarital sex for teen-agers, but once a girl has gone all the way it is unrealistic to think that she will stop simply because she is denied the pill. So then what? She risks becoming pregnant. And if she does, what has the doctor accomplished? He will have been responsible for (a) an unwanted baby, (b) an abortion, or (c) a hasty marriage. Which would you choose for your daughter?

This stance has not changed. When challenged by a reader in 2007 about the exclusion of “Are you married?” from her list of “Are you ready for parenthood?” questions, Abby responded “Sex before marriage may be ‘wrong’ but if my mail is any indication, it’s happening.”

In Abby’s Own Words:

“I urged her to confide in her mother or another trusted female adult, and if she could not do that, to consult Planned Parenthood ...”

Twelve of the 2007 columns addressing sex tackled the issue of teen sex. Abby suggested “waiting” in only two columns as a viable option for avoiding pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. In a third column, a wise reader advised teens to “save sex for marriage.”

One girl wrote to Abby about the fact that her 12-year-old friend had sex in the back of a van with a boy from school and now thinks she might be pregnant. Abby correctly encouraged the girl to tell her mother, but chose to highlight only the physical consequences of early sex. She simply said, “Whether your friend is pregnant or not, she needs to be seen by a doctor because she has become sexually active.” Abby did not advise the girl to urge her friend to refrain from further sexual activity.

Another, presumably young, reader wrote to Abby asking if her boyfriend was correct in assuming that breast development is a factor in the ability to get pregnant. Abby used the question to say, “Under no circumstances should you have unprotected sex. Not only will it place you at risk for pregnancy, but also for sexually transmitted infections.” The unwritten but glaring message is that “protected” sex is okay.

Even when Abby does advise abstinence, she does not recommend abstinence until marriage. A girl wrote to ask what to say to her sister to keep her from having sex. Abby correctly stated, “having sex with someone because she’s afraid that if she doesn’t she’ll lose him is doing it for the wrong reasons.” However, Abby goes on to say:

Remind Heidi that giving her virginity is something she can only do once – and that is the reason it should be with someone very special, preferably the man she would like to spend the rest of her life with. And even then, it should be because she’s really ready and not because it was something she was pressured into.

By leaving out marriage entirely, Abby is tacitly endorsing premarital sex, and even if it is practiced widely in our culture, Abby is supposed to have a reputation for hard-nosed, direct advice that might fly in the face of shifting values.

Dear Abby, Why Do You Send Teens to Planned Parenthood for Information about Sex?

For years, Abby’s favorite source of sexual expertise has been Planned Parenthood, as evidenced by mentions and referrals. Only one column in 2007, however, referred readers to Planned Parenthood. A 17-year-old girl wrote asking Abby if she thought sleeping with six guys meant she was promiscuous, and while Abby said yes, it does mean that she is promiscuous, she also stated:

The first thing that comes to mind is whether or not you know how to protect yourself from an unplanned pregnancy or a sexually transmitted disease. If the answer is no, then you need to see a doctor or visit a Planned Parenthood clinic and learn about the real facts of life.

The scarcity of 2007 referrals to Planned Parenthood is surprising because Jeanne Phillips admitted in 2003 to “have long been a supporter” of the organization, the nation’s largest abortion provider. In 1988, Planned Parenthood awarded Pauline Phillips, the original author of the Dear Abby column, the Margaret Sanger Award for her “leadership, excellence and outstanding contributions to the reproductive health and rights movement.”

In Abby’s Own Words:

“I would advise women to go to Crisis Pregnancy Centers if I were convinced they wouldn’t be forced to watch color videos of aborted fetuses.”

It’s easy to see why Dear Abby was accorded that honor.

Abby responded to a 1995 letter criticizing her support of Planned Parenthood by reciting a list of the organization’s “good” works:

But thank you for giving me the chance to point out that Planned Parenthood offers a wide range of reproductive health services that go far beyond abortion -- although the agency prides itself on being a pro-choice organization. Among the other services Planned Parenthood provides are breast and pelvic exams; screening for sexually transmitted diseases for both men and women; premarital blood testing in those states that require it; contraceptive services; sterilization consultation and procedures for both men and women; and prenatal care, including professional advice on nutrition, exercise, pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum care.

In 2003 Abby told a pregnant girl who signed herself "Alone and Terrified in Columbus, GA:"

If it is at all possible, confide in your mother or another trusted female adult right away...If there is no adult you trust enough to tell, your next best option is to contact Planned Parenthood. The caring and understanding staff will confirm whether or not you are pregnant. They will then explain all of your options to you...Planned Parenthood is listed in your phone book.

Some readers took her words to mean that she was advising the young girl to abort her baby. Abby defended the advice in a later 2003 column, stating, "I urged her to confide in her mother or another trusted female adult, and if she could not do that, to consult Planned Parenthood ... I knew that Planned Parenthood would advise her about her entire range of options." She also argued that "abortions are far safer today than they were 10 years ago -- and certainly safer than when the procedure was illegal and performed in back alleys." A postscript to the column stated, "I would advise women to go to Crisis Pregnancy Centers if I were convinced they wouldn't be forced to watch color videos of aborted fetuses."

Abby gives this type of advice to parents as well as teenagers. A parent wrote to Abby in 2003 expressing concern over her 18-year-old daughter's feeling that sex is "no big deal." Abby's advice?

I recommend that you both attend some sex education sessions so she hears with a fresh ear what the concerns really are. Planned Parenthood, which is in your phone book, would be an excellent reference.

While you're at it, contact the American Social Health Association (ASHA) and ask for some their comprehensive materials on sexually

transmitted diseases (STDs), which are rampant in our population. That way, even if your daughter is not willing to take your concerns to heart, she will at least know how to protect herself.

Abby wasn't alone in giving Planned Parenthood a ringing endorsement. She also reprinted letters from readers like this one, who wrote in 2002 to hail the organization:

You should have told "All Alone" that there are helpful agencies like Planned Parenthood that provide help for teen-agers without requiring legal consent of an adult. Not only can they provide medical attention to ensure that "All Alone" is safe and can have children in the future, but they provide the emotional support and peer counseling necessary to give her confidence and renewed self-esteem.

Abby Is a Long-time Supporter of Homosexuality

In her 1981 book, *The Best of Dear Abby*, Pauline Phillips stated that she, "for one, ha[s] always defended their [homosexuals'] rights to go their own way."

Twenty-six years and a new author later, the column still leads the fight to convince America that homosexuality is normal and not immoral. All of Abby's columns that touched on homosexuality in 2007 were sympathetic to homosexuality.

Abby printed a letter in 2000 from two women who worked for Planned Parenthood, stating, "Sex education has been shown to delay the onset of sexual intercourse, and parents are an excellent source for accurate sex information. Teens also make better decisions when they decide to become sexually active if they have had comprehensive sex education." The same letter also thanked Abby for her "continued crusade to protect our teens and [her] confidence that they will make the right decisions when given honest information."

Planned Parenthood might teach young people to use contraceptives and condoms to protect themselves and their partners from an unplanned pregnancy or STDs, but will Planned Parenthood teach them that contraceptives and condoms often fail? Will Planned Parenthood teach them about the toll the "sexually liberated" lifestyle can take on a person's mental, moral and emotional health?

Dear Abby, What Do You Have to Say About Homosexuality?

In her 1981 book, *The Best of Dear Abby*, Pauline Phillips stated that she, "for one, ha[s] always defended their [homosexuals'] rights to go their own way."

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"Distressed Aunt" wrote to Abby, asking if she should "out" her nephew to his parents after finding an online profile that listed his sexual orientation as "bi." Abby's response was, "If your nephew were engaging in self-destructive behavior, I would say tell his parents. However, identifying one's sexual orientation doesn't fall into that category."

"Perplexed in Michigan" wrote to Abby because she thought her husband was a homosexual because of the attention he received from homosexual men. Abby provided no moral comment on the man's sexuality in her response:

I can't help but wonder where it is that your husband is meeting all of the gay men that he brags are hitting on him. Could it be in gay bars? If that's the case, then he's gay.

Two columns urged homosexuals and their families to turn to the pro-homosexual organization PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) for support, and one urged parents to turn to gay and lesbian community centers, but none of the columns referred readers to organizations that help people overcome homosexuality, such as Exodus International.

PFLAG, in fact, credits the Abby column with "chang[ing] the course of" the organization's history. Its Web site says the organization received more than 7,000 letters after one mention in an Abby column in the 1980s. "Dear Abby" also received PFLAG's first-ever "Straight for Equality" award at its 2007 National Convention.

As a public service announcement for PFLAG, Abby used a letter from a mother who praised her son and his partner for allowing her to move in with them after she shunned them for many years. Abby told the mother:

Thank you for pointing out how important it is that people respect each other for who they are, not for what we would like them to be.

You could have learned that lesson long ago, had you and your husband contacted Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays when you first learned [your son] was gay. Among other

Dear Abby Supports What?!

It did not come as a shock when on October 10, 2007, the Associated Press reported that Phillips supports same-sex "marriage." She told the news bureau, "There should be gay marriage. I believe if two people want to commit to each other, God bless 'em. That is the highest form of commitment, for heaven's sake."

things, the organization offers support groups and education for parents who need to learn more about gender issues.

Abby also lets her readers do the promoting. She prints letters in praise of PFLAG, like this one which appeared later in 2007:

Thank you for recommending P-FLAG (sic) (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) to your readers. It is an organization that provides understanding and support to both gays and their families. I have a lesbian daughter who has brought me much joy and pride. I went to P-FLAG (sic) when she first came out, and it was the wisest thing I ever did for the two of us.

In 2004, Abby told a young man who was worried about coming out to his family:

In your case, the “wisest thing to do” would be to contact Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) and request information about how to come out to your family. At the same time, ask for literature that will help your family understand that sexual orientation isn’t something a person “chooses” on a lark, nor is it something for which a person should be punished.

In 2002 a mother wrote:

Thank you for the mention of PFLAG in your recent column. PFLAG does a great job providing helpful information for parents struggling with the coming-out of a son or daughter.

It did not come as a shock then, when on October 10, 2007, the Associated Press reported that Phillips supports same-sex “marriage.” She told the news bureau, “There should be gay marriage. I believe if two people want to commit to each other, God bless ‘em. That is the highest form of commitment, for heaven’s sake.”

Dear Abby, Is It Okay for Unmarried Adults to Have Sex?

Fifty-four columns on sex in 2007 specifically addressed sex between unmarried adults. Only once did Abby suggest waiting until marriage before engaging in sexual activity, and that was to a 59-year-old widow who asked how to respond to her 71-year-old widower companion’s question about how she feels about sex. Abby suggested, “The next time the gentleman asks how you feel about sex, say, ‘I love sex. How do you feel about marriage?’”

One reader wrote to Abby seeking advice about a “friends with benefits” sexual relationship between uncommitted lovers. The man wanted to continue the status quo of the relationship, while the reader wanted more. She asked, “Should I find someone who wants me for me – and more than a friend with benefits? Or should I wait it out and see what happens?” Abby’s response:

The time has come to tell him that being a “friend with benefits” was not what you signed on for – and goodbye. You should definitely look for someone who wants what you do in a relationship. And because it can take time to find, start now. Waiting it out with this “guy” would be a waste of time.

Abby Ignores the Moral Issue

A reader with a psychiatry student boyfriend wrote to Abby complaining about his need to analyze everything she says, to the point that they “can’t even have sex without him analyzing [her] feelings.” Abby ignored any moral concerns, advising the reader instead only to “remind him that he isn’t licensed to practice yet – and tell him that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.”

There is no suggestion that the woman should stop giving “benefits” without a marriage certificate issued in her name and the name of person who would like to receive said benefits – in other words, save it for marriage.

Another reader in a similar situation asked Abby what she should do regarding a “friends with benefits” relationship she would like to take to a more meaningful level.

The traditional advice would be to tell the young woman to stop dispensing the benefits, but Abby said:

My advice is to stop asking for a commitment, and fill the time you’re not with him with friends – and other dates should you meet someone you “click” with. When he calls, don’t always be instantly available. Show some independence. Some men find that trait very appealing – particularly if they’re relationship-phobic. After three or four more months, you can then have that chat with him about “where is this going?”

Another reader was wondering why a man with whom she “engaged in physical activity” no longer speaks to her. Abby replied that she “engaged in ‘physical activity’ with him too soon.” Abby made it merely a matter of timing, not the fact that they weren’t married.

A reader with a psychiatry student boyfriend wrote to Abby complaining about his need to analyze everything she says, to the point that they “can’t even have sex without him analyzing [her] feelings.” Abby ignored any moral concerns, advising the reader

instead only to “remind him that he isn’t licensed to practice yet – and tell him that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.”

Another letter raised the issue of sex between cousins, which Abby ignored in her response:

DEAR ABBY: I am 28 and have a wonderful 3-year-old daughter. When I was 12, my older cousin who was 16 at the time, fondled me, thinking I was asleep. I said nothing about it and neither did he.

That was 16 years ago. A couple of weeks ago we had sex, and now I’m pregnant. Should I lie to my family about who the father is? –Worried in Louisiana

DEAR WORRIED: You should not keep it a secret from your family. Because your cousin is the father of the baby, he will have a financial obligation to support it. Your obstetrician will need the information to determine whether your baby has a risk for a genetic disorder.

You didn’t mention whether you plan to continue this affair or marry your cousin. If the answer is yes, then I urge you to make absolutely sure that he does not do to your daughter or the baby what he did to you when you were so young, because his behavior was predatory.

Anything Goes

Abby’s responses illuminate her expansive views of sex. Even sex between cousins is acceptable as it’s consensual.

Abby’s responses to these dilemmas illuminate her expansive views of sex. Even sex between cousins is acceptable as long as it is consensual.

Dear Abby, What Else Do You Have to Say?

Twenty of Abby’s 2007 sex columns addressed offbeat sexual behaviors including nudism, cross-dressing, paid escorts, prostitution, and stripping.

In typical fashion, Abby failed to defend traditional morality on any of these issues. Instead, she fled headlong from taking any moral stand, condoning any behavior as long as it is not hurting anybody else.

“Clothes-Minded In Wisconsin” wrote to Abby with concerns about a 16-year-old male neighbor who liked to walk around his family’s home without clothes. After being in the boy’s presence while he was nude “dozens of times,” “Clothes-Minded” asked Abby, “Is it normal for a 16-year-old boy to walk around the house naked, in plain view of family members?” Abby said:

Standards regarding nudity vary from family to family, and obviously the Smiths are casual and open-minded on the subject. It's possible that you have been their neighbor so long that the young man considers you part of the family.

Because he has matured sufficiently that his nudity now makes you uncomfortable, you should hang curtains on your windows that face the Smiths' kitchen – and before dropping over there, call to ask whether he's presentable. If he's not, then don't go over.

"Challenged in Houston" asked Abby how to confront her nudist landlord about his venturing outdoors in the nude, which made some of her visitors uncomfortable. Abby never raised the issues of propriety, decency or simple consideration. Instead, she told "Challenged" to "ask your friends not to drop by without calling first. And when you know someone will be coming over, ask your landlord to please cover up because his nudity is shocking to some of your visitors."

Abby does not appear to have a problem with cross-dressing. "Alone With the Secret" wrote to Abby after her cross-dressing husband died, wondering how to explain it to her 11-year-old son. Abby responded:

As to discussing your husband's other self with your son, my experts advise that the best time to let children know about the cross-dressing is when they are very young (3 or 4) and can accept it naturally as "the way things are." Eleven years old is too advanced an age for the subject to be introduced now. You would do better to wait until the boy has matured into his late teens or adulthood to discuss it with him.

Another woman wrote to Abby in an attempt to understand her boyfriend's desire to dress as a woman, even though they have an active sex life. Abby ignored the immorality of unmarried sex, called cross-dressing a "quirk" and said to the woman, "If I really cared about him, I think I'd ask to spend some time with his 'other self.' Then I'd make up my mind about whether I could accept the situation."

"Teetering in Minnesota" asked Abby if he was wrong for not wanting to let his girlfriend continue working as a paid escort. Abby told "Teetering" that "your feelings are your feelings and you are entitled to them" and to "face the fact

If it Feels Good, Do It

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that [he] and Crystal have very different values, and let her go.” It’s good advice, but commentary on paid escorts would have also enlightened many of her readers.

A young woman wrote to say she was concerned that men approach her only when she is working as a stripper.

Dear Abby: I am 25 years old and still a virgin. I work as a stripper. Outside of work I am just a normal girl, studying for my bachelor’s degree in nursing.

I am friendly, attractive and outgoing, but no man has ever tried to approach or even talk to me when I’m not dancing naked. Is there something wrong with me? – “Tassles” in Fort Lauderdale

Dear Tassles: I am sure there is nothing “wrong” with you. The men who approach you when you’re dancing are not interested in the kind of relationship you are looking for. Be patient, use this time to study, and be thankful you aren’t being distracted right now. With a degree in nursing, you will have a bright future ahead. I’m sure you’ll meet a terrific life partner when the time is right.

How about advising her to look for employment in a less “distracting” environment?

A letter about prostitution, finally, prompted Abby to show a hint of moral backbone. “Trixie” asked Abby what she can do to stop “doing sexual acts for money” because she was afraid she might be harmed while doing so. Abby referred her to Sexaholics Anonymous and also Sex Workers Anonymous before stating that she found prostitution “sad.” Strong words coming from the non-judgmental Abby.

Conclusion

Dear Abby is not a trustworthy advisor on sexual matters. Her rejection of traditional morality underlies faulty advice about a myriad of sexual and relational issues, which exposes her readers to individual risk and pain, contributes to the degradation of the broader society, and ultimately wars against people taking personal responsibility for their lives and their loved ones.

Unfortunately, most people view Abby as a reliable source of wisdom, and she reaches tens of millions of readers every day. Eighty percent of Dear Abby readers are between the ages of 18 and 49, and most of the rest are under 18. Abby's audience is the rising generation that will shape America's future, and she is telling them that infidelity isn't always wrong, that the only serious risks of sex outside marriage are pregnancy and disease, and that homosexuality, nudism and cross-dressing are normal.

The logical result of following Abby's advice is fewer marriages, more sexual experimentation and fewer strong families producing self-governing citizens.

Publications that carry Abby might want to consider carrying a label:

Warning: Although Abby has a reputation as the stern aunt who can deliver a well-placed kick to your backside when needed, on sexual topics her foot will push you further in the wrong direction at least half the time.

ⁱW. Patrick Cunningham. "Mainstreaming Moral Relativism: The Friedman Twins," *Culture Wars*. April, 1997.

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About the Culture and Media Institute

The Culture and Media Institute's mission is to advance, preserve, and help restore America's culture, character, traditional values, and morals against the assault of the liberal media elite. Founded in October 2006 with a challenge grant from the Templeton Foundation, CMI has already attracted attention from the Rush Limbaugh Show, Fox News Channel, CNN and many other news outlets.

Using the unique resources at Media Research Center, CMI is exposing media campaigns against the traditional values of faith, self-reliance, patriotism, marriage, decency, civic pride, gratitude, industriousness and good manners. CMI staffers regularly appear on TV, radio and in print, and publish periodic reports as well as articles for outside publications.

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About the MRC

Founded in 1987, the Media Research Center (MRC) is America's largest and most respected media watchdog group. Its mission is to create a media culture where truth and liberty flourish in America.

The Alexandria, Virginia-based organization brings balance and responsibility to the news media through its **News Analysis Division**, which documents, exposes and neutralizes liberal media bias; the **Business & Media Institute**, which audits the media's coverage of economic issues; **TimesWatch.org**, which monitors the New York Times; and **Newsbusters.org**, the MRC blog, which exposes liberal media bias 24 hours a day.

The MRC is also home to the **Cybercast News Service (CNSNews.com)**, an Internet news outlet that is dedicated to providing unbiased coverage of the news of the day.

In 2006, the MRC launched the **Culture and Media Institute** with a mission to advance and help restore America's culture, character, traditional values and morals against the assault of the liberal media elite.

Former CBS reporter and now best-selling author Bernard Goldberg says of the MRC, "The Media Research Center folks don't give the media hell; they just tell the truth and the media thinks it's hell."

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