

Hospitals must follow privacy wishes

DEAR ABBY: I am a nursing supervisor in a large hospital. There is a policy in hospitals that the public does not understand, and it has caused more than a few problems.

Because of privacy laws, all patients admitted to the hospital must be asked if they want to be a "privacy patient" or a "no publicity patient." If they answer yes to that question, it means that if anyone calls, or comes to the hospital, we cannot even acknowledge that the patient is here. We must say, "I don't have a patient listed by that name."

Not surprisingly, this often upsets friends and family members. So please, Abby, remind your readers about the privacy laws. We are not purposely lying to anyone; we are just following the patient's instructions and obeying the rules.

— FRUSTRATED NURSE IN IRONTON, OHIO

DEAR FRUSTRATED: Thank YOU for injecting an important dose of reality. While some patients may welcome visitors, many more do not. One solution is to assign a particular relative or friend to be the "minister of information." That way, there is less emotional wear and tear on all concerned.

DEAR ABBY: My fiancée has requested that I stop opening doors for her after I asked her to acknowledge my courtesy with a "thank you." This simple (in my opinion) request turned into a huge argument after she told me I should not open doors for her anymore.

Abby, I was brought up to be a gentleman and to treat women like ladies. Am I wrong for wanting to be appreciated for doing this, or should I stop being so darn sensitive and forget about opening doors for her, which goes against who I am?

— CLOSING THIS DOOR

DEAR CLOSING: You are not "wrong" to want your courtesy to be acknowledged. That is the way you were raised. However, you have proposed to someone whose background is not as refined as yours. Before you tie the knot, please consider carefully that this woman will be raising your children. Is someone with her attitude the kind of person with whom you want to spend the rest of your life?

DEAR ABBY: When my husband's grandmother died two years



Abigail Van Buren

• Dear Abby

ago, my mother-in-law, "Shirley," told us we could go through the items left in her mother's house, take what we wanted, and then discard the rest. I took mostly kitchen stuff — mainly pots and pans.

My birthday was last week and I had to work late, so Shirley came over and cooked dinner for me. A couple of days later, I was going to cook some lasagna and take it to her home, but after searching high and low, I was unable to locate a particular dish I used. Finally, after going through every cupboard, I called Shirley to ask where she had put it. She then informed me that since it was her mother's dish, she had taken it.

I was upset and told her I wanted it back. Shirley told me no and hung up on me! My mother-in-law has not spoken to me since, and now she's fighting with my husband because he stood up to defend me.

I don't want a lasagna dish to divide my family, but I refuse to be treated this way. How would you have handled this situation?

— OFFENDED IN ODESSA
DEAR OFFENDED: Your mother-in-law was wrong to take the dish without asking or letting you know. However, it's possible the item has some sentimental meaning to her. Bearing that in mind, and in the interest of fam-

ily harmony, I'd have written Shirley a note telling her that she's welcome to it — and then I'd have gone out and bought myself another lasagna pan.

Editor's note: Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, Calif. 90069.

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