

Daughters

For Parents of Girls

Sept/Oct 2006

Ask the expert

My 13-year-old daughter and I get along splendidly when my husband is out of town on business, whether it's for one day or for two weeks. As soon as he returns, I'm persona non grata. Every comment I make is met with eye rolls and deep sighs or worse. What can I do to mitigate this situation?

M.H in California

Many parents—especially moms—encounter this, and here are a few reasons. First of all, your daughter is searching for her own identity, and this complicates her relationship with you. She admires you and aspires to be like you; she also needs to feel like “her own person” and seek independence from you.

Your daughter is also at the age when many girls become interested in boys, and positive attention from her dad can give her confidence in this perplexing area. Even when the underlying relationship between mother and daughter is good, as yours appears to be, it's not unusual for teen girls to seek attention from their dads at the expense of their moms.

Your daughter may feel angry or anxious when her dad travels, yet may take out these feelings on the person she's most comfortable and secure with—you! However, a lack of courtesy is not acceptable under any circumstances.

I suggest that you talk with your husband about a strategy for deal-

ing with your daughter's rude behavior with a clear, consistent message. For example, when she rolls her eyes you might say something like, “Your father and I have talked, and we both expect you to treat me with more respect. Rolling your eyes at me is not respectful. If you disagree with something I say, you can tell me directly and we'll discuss it.”

This approach both sets appropriate limits with your daughter and teaches her effective communication skills which will help her to be truly independent as she grows into adulthood.

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