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Dear Abby

Teacher pushed around by kids

ABIGAIL VAN BUREN Syndicated Columnist

DEAR ABBY: I am a high school teacher who has been encountering problems with my students. I admit my personality is bland. My favorite flavor of ice cream is vanilla; my favorite color is beige — you get the picture. I speak in a monotone. My students won't let me hear the end of it.

I know I should enforce discipline, but I don't have any control over my students. They blatantly ridicule my clothing and my voice. Sometimes I even feel bullied. I try to ignore it, but it doesn't seem to end. The entire class participates and finds it hilarious. What can I do to control my students? — TRYING HARD IN TENNESSEE

DEAR TRYING HARD: The first thing to do is talk with the other educators in your school about your inability to enforce discipline. They may be able to offer some suggestions. You should also explore whether the school district offers any classes in assertiveness training. If it doesn't, then please give serious consideration to changing careers.

DEAR ABBY: I am a 23-year-old gay man. Five years ago, I became involved with "Jeff," an older married man. Jeff would spend an hour or two with me three times a week while I was in high school, and spent more time in my apartment when I was in college. He also contributed \$6,000 toward my education.

Now that I have graduated and am working, Jeff has offered me \$20,000 as a down payment on a house three doors down from his. He says it's a gift.

I love Jeff, but in five years, when his youngest child is in college, if he doesn't leave his wife, I'll be ready to move on. Would I be obligated to repay him if I left?

Jeff has told me repeatedly that the last five years with me have been the best of his life. If I spend another five years with him, he will have had the best 10 years of his life for a \$26,000 investment (or about \$50 a week). Am I being selfish or smart? — CLOSETED IN INDIANA

DEAR CLOSETED: Neither. In five years, unless you want to look at yourself in the mirror and see someone who sold himself for \$50 a week, do not accept the money. There is little dignity in being someone's secret lover.

Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.





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