

# Decision on magazine should reflect lifestyle you want

## STREET SENSE



BARBARA SCHIFF

Barbara, I am an intelligent, thoughtful, mother of a 12-year-old son. He and I are very close. Although my upbringing was Catholic, I struggled successfully to rid myself of the biases against the open discussion of sexuality with which I was raised. I am backed up in this by my husband who was raised in a different culture, one in which openness about sexuality is supported. Last week my son came to me

and told me he wants a subscription to "Playboy" magazine. He is an active, healthy kid who is popular with his peers and gets excellent grades. He is well-adjusted. He explained to me that he loves to look at pictures of the beautiful women. He says that since he knows he and his friends will be doing this, he does not want to sneak. He wants his behavior to be out in the open.

My brother loved to look at pictures of naked women when he was a teenager, but he couldn't be honest about his behavior. He had to lie to do it. My brother outgrew his interest when he was about 20. So, I reason, isn't it better to have honest communication than to know my son must hide from me? I am open, however, to

suggestions about this from others. What do you think?

Dear Caller:

The question you ask is something called a "rule of the house" question. That means that in every home there are rules and guidelines the family works out which then, hopefully, help them balance good taste, good psychological and physical health, and individual enjoyment. Some other examples of these kinds of questions are: "Is junk food allowed?" "How open can teenagers and young adults be about sex?" "Is smoking allowed?" "Should infants sleep with their parents?"

Questions like these can be seen from more than one point of view; there is more than one good

answer. The best answer depends on what is going on in that particular family, at that particular point in time. No professional can tell you what to do because he can't tell you who you are, or what kind of home you want to have.

Do you want your home to be one with "Playboy" or without "Playboy"? Or, in another example, one with junk food or one without junk food? After you decide how you will answer the first question, then you must decide who is in charge in your house; how much democracy you think is appropriate.

That said, there are some pitfalls in your reasoning you should consider. First, if you tell your son you do not want him to have a subscription to "Playboy," he

need not deceive you. With your knowledge and approval, he can enjoy the pictures outside of your home.

Second, a stack of "Playboy" magazines on his nightstand will probably command a lot of time. As you know from your brother's and husband's experience, it is expected that 12-year-old boys will look at pictures of sexy women, but does looking something justify spending a lot of time that way?

Third, recent feminist literature decries the commercialization of women that "Playboy" and magazines like it convey. There is a lot to support the point of view that these magazines encourage disrespect for women.

Fourth, and last, men have

complained that a steady diet of "fantasy" women makes them disappointed when they are with "real" women, and thus, poor partners for them.

With these arguments, I reveal my point of view on the subject. If any of you reading this have other arguments on either side, please write to enlighten all of us.

Barbara

If you have a question or a comment for Barbara Schiff, a trained therapist and experienced columnist, send it to Street Sense, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. You can also leave a message by calling 953-2047, mail box 1877, on a touch-tone phone.

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