

Abby Answers

Dear Absent-Minded Mother,

Get a grip.

Move to a new home not near any freeways.

When you cannot see them, your children have not dematerialized.

However, if you do not feed them, they will die.

Ask them to tell you what you look like in their dreams.

Pay attention to the sequence of events happening around you.

If you start to read a book, finish it.

There is no substitute for perseverance.

However remote it may seem, your mind follows you wherever you go.

That which is faded today may yet emerge, as clear as day, tomorrow.

Dear Marginally Sane in South Central,

Hang on.

If being home all the time helps you stop shaking, stay there.

If you can't stand your daughter's voice over the phone, hang up.

If dozing while cooking creates a hazard, order pizza delivery.

If no one ever listens, subsequent pleas will go unheard.

If being in the south reminds you of lynchings, go north.

If no one knows your exact location, count your blessings.

If all else fails, concentrate on breathing.

If you cannot live your life like this, put it in God's hands.

If you do not believe in God, leave it up to fate.

Dear Clinical Trial Drop-Out,

Make amends.

How many hours of heartache have you caused to save yourself just one?

The anxiety produced by having to drive downtown seems negligible.

Do you know the kind of suffering girls endure who have no hope?

Even the most ordinary of cases results in life-long doubt.

Have you forgotten the importance of keeping a promise?

Beginning a thing has no meaning until its ending.

Do you think you can live with yourself?

Practice saying out loud, *I am not a quitter.*

Before returning to the clinic, take a good look in the mirror.

Dear Finders Keepers Losers Weepers,

That child belongs to someone. Return her.
That watch does not tell its time for you. Put it back.
Along the road you may discover the truly abandoned:
Crooked necked spoons, sewing machine parts, razors.
If you are hungry, considering gulping down the soupy residue.
If you are naked, push the needle through the foot.
And if you are whole, think twice before slicing or dicing.
I have always found it best to consider that which
Falls into my lap a lucky happenstance. A gift.
Perhaps as you ponder your plunder you too will find
Snippets of bliss in things without value, without cost.

Dear Daydreaming Over Dallas,

The woman in 3B needs her ginger ale. Now.
While you wonder whether clouds make rain
Or rain makes clouds (the former, by the way) and
Calculate just how often jet fumes might cause cancer
(A lot, I'd guess), antacid come undone from its capsule
Cuts a burning path down her throat that threatens
To outdo the fire in her belly. And across the aisle
The 7 year-old in 4D has just pierced his palm
With the pin on his airplane wings and is wailing.
Consider the options as you bustle down the aisle.
Free flights to anywhere aside, jetting back and forth
More than you dream in your sheets may, in the end,
Prove hazardous to your health. And, besides, everyone
On that plane is counting on you in case of emergency.

Dear Dad at Wit's End,

Slow down. When your son shoves his ugliest face
One inch from your own, it's a sign of trouble.
When he won't stop, won't stop, won't stop making
That noise, it's evidence of distress. You may need
To take extraordinary measures. Like, for example, lie.
Tell him you have AIDS and will be gone tomorrow.
Tell him, conversely, that you're due for a vacation
And will be back next year. Or, consider telling him
The truth: the boss rides your ass all day, the ex-wife
Just won't shut up, the tax man wants more, and
Worse yet, the guy upstairs is frying fish again.
And you, you just need a little space, you just want
A little kindness, a little fly fishing on the Sacco,
Maybe some stars overhead or clouds that don't mean rain.
When your son is the last one in line to wreck your day
Tell him this: that you are lost.

Dear Little Lost Lamb,

Wake up.

Clicking your heels together repeatedly

Won't get you anywhere.

Three things may help:

- 1) Trace your steps.
- 2) Try words beginning with A through Z.
- 3) Keep a record of your dreams.

You didn't ask, but

You need to fire your tour guide.

He's been acting in absentia

For way too long.

Plus, his ideas about justice

Strike me as outdated.

I mean, really, an eye for an eye?

Dear Done with Diets,

Listen carefully:

You are what you eat.

Nibble the darkest chocolate

And devour cashews by the handful.

Mangos make a lovely side dish.

Italian restaurants – the ones

Packed with actual Italians, mind you –

Offer a stunning array of options.

Try the meatballs to start.

They do amazing things

With pork chops.

Don't forget to finish it off

With fried ravioli – the ones filled

With sweet cheese and doused in honey.

(Tiramisu is over-rated, if you ask me.)

On Saturdays, never miss the market.

Buy several pounds of early potatoes

And eat them boiled, fried and baked.

When friends come calling

Feed them salads, be sure

To use that frilly, weed-like lettuce

And lemon juice as dressing.

They will be sure to say

You have never looked better.