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about the good life.

# ask audrey



## Beauty

**Q** I have a big event coming up and I want to look my absolute best. I've heard of putting cold tea bags under my eyes to reduce puffiness, but are there any other beauty secrets that I can do the week or day of to give my face some quick, short-term boosts? — N.M.

**Makeup artist Suzie Kim answers:** For any special event my first concern is always the condition of my skin. The better your skin looks, the better your makeup will look. The night before, I treat my skin to a great exfoliating mask/peel that sloughs away dead skin cells and helps brighten my complexion. One of my favorites is Declor Phytopeel, which is also great for sensitive skin. My next must-have product is the Photofinish Color Correcting Foundation Primer in Blend. Just apply right before your foundation and you'll notice your skin looking smooth and glowy, especially in pictures. Then last but not least is my personal obsession — lashes. Lashes always finish off the look. Whether they're loaded up with mascara or just fakes, lashes make an important beauty statement for any special event. My favorite dramatic mascara is the new Dior Show Waterproof Mascara, which builds full and lush lashes without smearing throughout the night. Try using a heated lash curler to curl after applying mascara, which helps prevent clumpiness. If you're feeling a little brave, try some false lashes that will really pump up your look.

**Q** I've been reading about this product that contains 10 percent mandelic acid and 10 percent malic acid. I've never heard of these ingredients before, but dozens of comments on these online boards all say these ingredients have effectively faded age spots, sunspots and even melasma that people claim to have had for years. I've tried laser treatments, chemical treatments, over-the-counter and prescription products with hydroquinone and kojic acid, but other than a little temporary fading, nothing has really worked to get rid of my sunspots for good. I'm

of East Asian descent (medium skin tone), so I'm also concerned about hyperpigmentation. Are these ingredients safe for me and will they work? And how do spot faders work with self-tanners for face? — Spotty on the Details in Sunny Los Angeles

**Dermatologist to the stars Dr. Jessica Wu answers:** Mandelic and malic acids are newer alphahydroxy acids that are less irritating than glycolic acid. Like other AHAs, they work by exfoliating the top layers of skin to help remove sun damage and discoloration. This might make your skin slightly more sun sensitive (and therefore more likely to pigment), so be sure to use a broad spectrum UVA/UVB protecting sunscreen whenever you're using any AHA product. As long as you're using proper sun protection, and your skin isn't showing signs of irritation (redness, itching, swelling), you're probably safe to use these products. As far as fading your spots, AHAs generally don't work as well as hydroquinone. This is because hydroquinone actually suppresses the

I'm having a little get-together for my tiny, new place, and I'd like to serve some alcohol, but I don't like wine and I can't mix drinks. Any ideas? — Jamie

**The Editors answer:** Our latest discovery is Nuvo sparkling vodka liqueur. It's made to be enjoyed over ice, not mixed, so there's no work involved for you. Just get some champagne flutes and you're good to go. Plus, the bottle is so gorgeous (we thought it was perfume when we first got it), it partly serves as decoration for your little fête. And if that weren't enough incentive, a portion of the proceeds of every bottle of Nuvo sold goes towards women's causes. Check out [www.nuvoforher.com](http://www.nuvoforher.com).



NUVO PHOTO COURTESY OF TRACTENBERG & CO.

overactive skin pigment cells to prevent new spots, while AHAs just remove the top layers of pigmented skin. For best results, many of my patients use both hydroquinone and AHAs.

It's definitely safe to use self-tanners with spot faders. But if your spot fader is making your skin dry and flaky, wait until your skin smoothes out; otherwise the self-tanner will "grab" onto your flaky skin and make you look blotchy.

## relationships

**Q** I am an African American woman married to a Japanese American man. We are expecting a baby in early 2008. This is supposed to be a happy time for us, but instead of planning a baby shower, deciding on names and all the other fun stuff that comes with expecting a child, his mother is drilling me with questions on how the baby will be raised. She is concerned that we will ignore the baby's Japanese heritage and is constantly reminding me that the child is half Japanese. I know that my in-laws are very traditional and this is a very important time for them, but sometimes I don't know how to talk to my mother-in-law. How can I assure her that her first grandchild will know his/her Asian heritage? — Tamara C.

### Psychotherapist Meme Rhee

**answers:** To be fully supported by your

family and friends during this time of great upheaval and change (physical, personal and perhaps even financial and professional) would probably mollify some of your anxiety, but pregnancy and motherhood is an undertaking that is guaranteed to test your patience. If the presence of an overbearing mother-in-law gets in the way of your happiness during this very exciting time, I wonder if it speaks more to a stress threshold that has been compromised by changing hormones, increased fatigue and emotional sensitivity. Whenever we experience rapid change, we impulsively cling to what we know and who we are. When your mother-in-law reminds you that your baby is half Japanese, do you think her communication alludes to exclusion, racism or entitlement? To her, the subtext may be: let me be involved, I sense your aloofness, I feel excluded. Could you include her more in planning the baby shower? Could you allow her to facilitate the traditional Japanese rituals so she feels important? Could you join, rather than compete with, her excitement?

I also surmise that her anxiety (which prompts her to remind you of the baby's Japanese heritage) emerges from her awareness about the difference in childrearing between Americans and Japanese. While Americans encourage their children to individuate and become independent, the Japanese encourage developmental dependence in infants and children to enhance the bonding experience between mother and child. Such a bond ultimately enhances non-

verbal, intuitive communication. For example, a traditional Japanese mother would not set up a separate room for her child, rather she would sleep with the child because proximity strengthens her bond and renders the child less comfortable with separateness and boundaries. A Japanese child would most likely not tell his mother he wants to order a Happy Meal. He would, instead, rely on the intuition of his mother who would order with accuracy without any explicit communication from either side. Perhaps your mother-in-law is anxious because she observes your independence, and maybe even your resistance to be curious, to collaborate, and/or to assuage her. You certainly have a choice: you can be more interested and allow her to teach you about Japanese childrearing, or you can be defiant and exclude her. Choose the route that inspires the least amount of stress and the greatest amount of happiness. You're thinking not just for yourself, but also for your expanding and culturally unique family. p

## Our

From music videos to editorial shoots, **Suzie Kim** has been tackling every aspect of makeup in the entertainment industry. After only three years in the business, Suzie is quickly moving up, stepping foot into the realm of makeup in Hollywood. Passion for art, color and design is what motivates her to pursue her aspirations.



**Jessica Wu** is a Harvard-educated, board-certified dermatologist with her own line of skincare products, Dr. Jessica Wu Cosmeceuticals, which incorporate the most advanced skincare ingredients and Asian botanical extracts. You can get Jessica Wu's fabulous skincare line at [www.drjessicawu.com](http://www.drjessicawu.com).



Psychotherapist **Meme Rhee** practices in Southern California at the Akasha Center for Integrative Medicine, and the Bellavita Eating Disorders Clinic. Meme provides individual and corporate counseling and cross-cultural and leadership training.



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# Whose Right Is It Anyway?

Psychotherapist Meme Rhee unravels the role of “purview” in our most common relationship battlegrounds.

STORY Meme Rhee

In the therapy room, I witness the power struggles between parents and children, within couples and between siblings. The girlfriend complains because her boyfriend won't let her wear a certain miniskirt; the son feels disgruntled because he wants to study music while his father stresses business; the brother orders his little sister to dump her boyfriend. Each individual fights to defend a position and generally at the cost of peace and sometimes even the relationship. What I find particularly striking in these situations is the inattention to the issue of purview.

Purview is defined as the range or limit of authority, competence, responsibility, concern or intention. Is it within your mother-in-law's purview to criticize your childrearing? Is it outside your partner's purview to choose your friends? Is it within your boss's purview to demand something beneath your job description?

Among Westerners, I notice relationships have greater flexibility that allows for negotiation and sensitivity to feelings and context. For example, a father complains to his son about all the ATM fees he has accrued in his account. The son resents his father's micromanagement but enjoys the frequent deposits his father makes to help him out. Father and son clearly disagree on the purview of the other's management of money. So the son gets a separate bank account and assumes responsibility for his own bank fees and the father no longer feels compelled to meddle. In this example, father and son clarify purview through negotiation and action.

In an Asian context, such a scenario is unlikely to transpire. Asians rarely have to clarify purview because purview is implicitly defined by role not situation. The role (and authority) of every father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, elder brother, sister, etc., is predetermined by a Confucian social order. The inherent authority in each role predates the relationship and gives little or no credence to feelings and context. Hence, in this example, the father's authority does not need clarification. His complaint would be received as a mandate to the son to be more mindful and to withdraw cash from his home bank. Because he is the father and provider, it is within his purview to micromanage his son's account.

But what if the situation were reversed? What if the son supported the father and felt annoyed about his father's accrual of ATM fees? Is it within the son's purview to ask his father to be more mindful? Perhaps, but the idea of separate bank accounts would hardly occur to either of them as a reasonable solution. Such an action denies the son's deference to his father and implies that the needs of both father and son deserve equal attention. This is where purview can get a little tricky. Asians would more likely address the problem by paying attention to what is more practical (in this case, not accruing unnecessary fees) rather than emphasizing the “rights” of each individual. More importantly, father and son share an obligation to the other to handle the problem as a team, not as individuals to fend for themselves.

In Asian cultures, purview enhances with age, gender, education, economic status and title. In the Asian American landscape, however, purview becomes increasingly ambiguous as roles become less codified. Younger generations adopt a more westernized value system that prizes independence and individualism. A very successful 31-year-old Korean woman came to me to resolve her conflict with her older brother whom she financially supported. As the older brother, he felt it was within his purview to approve of (or reject) her choice of suitors. She, however, decided that her financial superiority usurped his authority. In this case, I sided with the woman. Her extreme success already limited her choices, and her strong personality attracted like-minded men outside her brother's comfort zone. There was nothing particularly horrible about her dates and she demonstrated enough competence in her life to invite my confidence on the matter. I also felt that he cared less about her partnership and more about exercising his authority to mitigate his shame for being financially dependent on her. My decision considered the greatest opportunity for change and growth for each sibling; for her, it was to explore intimacy without inhibitions and for him to confront his shame.

But what about the girlfriend whose skirt is too short for her boyfriend's comfort? Is it within his purview to demand her observance of a more conservative wardrobe? Many Asian males would blurt out, "Of course!" More often than not, I notice how the girlfriend avoids confrontation.

"I just wear a longer skirt when I go out with him, and a shorter one when I go out with the girls," shrugs my 20-year-old Vietnamese client.

It's so simple to her because her solution allows her to achieve three things: she can avoid an argument, please her partner and get her way. For her, the issue of purview is subordinate to maintaining peace. For many *non*-Asian Americans who live under the umbrella of a more ambiguous social structure, purview has to be more explicitly communicated. The non-Asian American woman is more likely to set a boundary with her boyfriend and declare that her choice of clothing is simply outside his purview.

In either situation, however, how should the boyfriend approach her? I more commonly witness Asian and Western boyfriends exercising authority by yelling at their girlfriends. In the therapy room, American couples can more easily negotiate this issue by allocating purview after each partner has communicated feelings. He might express the jealousy he feels

when other men look at her; she might express her desire to feel sexy. In such a situation, purview is negotiated to help the other manage his/her emotion. Negotiation, again, suggests, that each partner has an equal say, that the feelings of each individual are important.

When the Asian American girlfriend wears a short skirt in her boyfriend's absence, is she being deceitful? Passive aggressive? Practical? Courteous? Her action might express some of each, but most clearly demonstrates respect and responsibility for *his* comfort whenever he is present and *her* comfort when he is not.

I work with a young Korean American teenager who joined a clique of Hispanic Americans, much to her parents' discomfort. Her parents speak little English and work 14-hour days to put her in private school where she feels rejected and out of place. Her parents feel it is within their purview to choose her friends. She resents them and calls them racist snobs and rebels against them. They scream at each other every day, but never arrive at a solution. The parents cannot monitor her because they work all day. The daughter disconnects from her parents and finds solace with her non-judgmental friends. This has been going on for many months and I feel concern for both sides because the stress of fighting has clearly taken a toll on their ability to function at work and school.

When dispute reaches an impasse, perhaps everyone would benefit from swallowing a bit of pride and participating in negotiation. While highly uncharacteristic of a Confucian-driven culture, the evolving values of each generation inspire a more solution-focused approach to conflict.

Here are some tips for negotiating and defining purview:

1. Use "I" statements. "I feel uncomfortable when you \_\_\_\_\_." By expressing your feelings, you are more likely to elicit compassion and willingness.
2. Try not to blame. "You always \_\_\_\_\_!" Blame usually incites resentment and becomes an obstacle to a solution.
3. Try not to yell. Anger often begets anger or fear. You will more likely get your point across by speaking calmly.
4. Try to understand the other's position. Can you be empathic? Who is being more practical?
5. Examine your own position. Are you being a control freak? Or are you concerned about the other's welfare?
6. When no resolution can be reached, use a counselor to facilitate. **p**



**Meme Rhee** is a psychotherapist practicing at the Akasha Center for Integrative Medicine in Southern California, as well as the Bellavita Eating Disorders Clinic. She provides individual and corporate counseling and cross-cultural and leadership training. Meme's article was inspired by an essay on purview written by her mentor, Dr. John Smolowe, adjunct professor at Stanford University.