

Dear Abby

Daughter Wants to Withdraw From Dad's Battle With Booze

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by Abigail Van Buren

DEAR ABBY: I'm 15 and live with my parents. My dad is an alcoholic who has finally figured out that he has had a problem for years. When I was in sixth grade, he left me once in the middle of the night (Mom was out of town) to go out drinking. Ever since that night, I have felt so much pain. I feel like I'm not important -- or why else would he leave me?

He thinks it's OK to talk to me about what he does and how much he regrets it. I love him, but I don't want to hear about how he got drunk the night before or anything like that! It has added a lot of stress to my life. I get all A's in school and I'm in accelerated classes, but recently it has become really hard to concentrate with all of this going on at home. What should I do? --

STRESSED TEEN IN WASHINGTON

DEAR STRESSED TEEN: Tell your mother exactly what you have told me. Your father appears to be trying to use you as his therapist to assuage his guilt about his drinking. Not only is this unfair to you, it is also not a solution to his problem. He should be talking about those things in a substance abuse meeting, not to his teenager.

Alateen is a support group for children of alcoholics. It would be helpful for you to go online and find the location of the nearest one. The website is www.al-anon.alateen.org, or you can call 1-888-425-2666. The group was formed for young people just like you, and you will find it not only informative, but also very helpful.