

An Open Letter To My Teacher

Dear Teacher,

I think it's time I told you why I have been acting out at school and crying sometimes. I think you know that something is wrong, because you keep asking me, "What's the matter?" The reason I haven't told you before is that I can't talk to you in the hallway with all the other kids staring at me—and until now, I didn't feel like I could talk to anybody about it.

I'm worried about my schoolwork. I keep getting in trouble for not doing my homework, and not listening in class. Sometimes I am so scared that I just get mad at everybody. I don't mean to yell. I just feel like everyone is picking on me at home and at school.

You see, my dad has a drinking problem. It's called "alcoholism." It means that he can't control his drinking. He comes home some nights really drunk and yells at all of us. Then Mom yells back at him for being drunk and spending all the money. Sometimes he hits her, or my sister and me for no reason, just because he is drunk. Sometimes my sister and I are so scared that we hide in our room.

I used to hate my mom and dad for all that - Mom for yelling at Dad and making him even madder, and Dad for his drinking. I don't hate them anymore because I found out why they were like that.

One day a lady came and talked to my mom, and I listened, too.

She was the one who explained to us what alcoholism is. I learned that my dad was not horrible, just sick. He has a disease called alcoholism. She told us that when there is someone in the house with a drinking problem, the whole family gets hurt by it. She also told my mom about Al-Anon. That is where families and friends of problem drinkers go to understand the disease of alcoholism and how they can stop being so scared and mad all the time.

Now Mom goes to Al-Anon. It works, too. Mom doesn't scream at Dad or us as much anymore. I go to Alateen, that's for kids affected by someone else's drinking. Sometimes we have friends that drink too. Now I understand, and it feels good not to be the only one with my kind of problem.

I think that teachers should know about alcoholism, because then they would understand kids like me. If you know of any kids who might have a problem with a drinking parent or a drinking friend, you could tell them where they can get help. It really helped me. For more information please contact _____ or 888-425-2666 (888-4AL-ANON), Monday through Friday, 8 AM to 6 PM, ET for the location of an Alateen meeting.

Compiled and Distributed by:
AL-ANON FAMILY GROUP HEADQUARTERS, INC.
1600 Corporate Landing Parkway
Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617
www.al-anon.alateen.org wso@al-anon.org

Signed,
Your Student