

## Alcoholic Father

**My dad is an alcoholic and doesn't believe it. He has never hit me or my mom, or my sisters. But when he drinks he yells at us for nothing. He constantly calls us names and my mom and I almost can't take it anymore. He recently got a DUI and lost his drivers license. He promised that he would lay off the beer, but couldn't go one day without it. Can you give me any advice on how to help him or make him realize that he needs help? I don't know what to do!!**

There are times when I get a letter like this where there is nothing that I can write to take away the pain you're feeling, or make your dad stop drinking and yelling. To be honest, I wish I could come there and shake him and try to make him see what he is doing to make you feel this way, but also because of the emptiness his actions are causing inside of you. But I know that will not make things change.

You see, your dad is addicted. For many, alcohol is a numbing device for painful memories or failures that they just don't know how to deal with. Your dad probably really wants to quit deep down inside, but being sober is hard. And his pride is probably stopping him from admitting there's a problem. But he will need to want help. No one can force him to get sober. He has to want it. And even then it will be difficult because it is an addiction. This doesn't mean you should stop trying to address it in a loving and caring way. I know you don't like the drunkenness, but you still love your Dad.

You mentioned that your dad has never hit you, but verbal abuse is still abuse. Even though you may not know it you internalize those things and may have started to believe them because of your dad's influence. Many people allow a parent's verbal abuse to penetrate their heart and convince them that they're at fault for their parent's misery and that they're good for nothing. Please, please, please, don't buy the lie. You are valuable and have infinite worth. It sounds like you're handling things right... respecting him, but not enabling him. It's important that when you do try to talk to him about his drinking that you not do it when he is under the influence of alcohol. His ability to speak rationally will be very poor and your emotions will be too heightened to engage in a conversation.

You may have heard this before, but something to consider is how we can allow these bad things in life to make us a better person, rather than becoming a bitter person. Many things may have hurt your father in life and perhaps the only way he knows how to deal with them is to drink. Some people allow a hard life to affect how they act as an adult in a bad way. It's important to remember that example in our own lives and not go down the same path and repeat the cycle. It's his choice to deal with the pain of his past by drinking. You have a choice to deal with the pain his drinking is causing you too, and I hope you can make better choices in life and stop the cycle.

You can find purpose, worth and life even if your dad never changes. You may still hurt, but you can still have a life worth living. Do you have people you can talk to about this – A friend, youth pastor, or school counselor? It's helpful to just have someone to share feelings with. I'd recommend you look up ALANON on a website [www.alanon.org](http://www.alanon.org) because you'll be able to learn from others who've been through the same struggles on how to deal with it and not let the problems affect you even more than they do now.

I'm always afraid that when I give advice, it may sound trite. I hope you don't feel that way. But if you do, please consider that just because something sounds trite doesn't mean it isn't true. Please don't give up. You can get through this even if all the feelings don't go away. As for convincing your dad that he has a problem, that will need to come in time. Continue loving him through this and continue to be honest with him in a respectful way.

Articles are written by Bob Lenz, Tiffany Thompson and other national youth communicators with Life Promotions Inc., a non-profit youth organization committed to instilling hope, worth and value in youth.

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