

Sent: Monday, February 28, 2005

Subject: Desperately in need of help

Dear Eddie,

I sit here in front of the computer reading your articles for the first time, in tears and with a black eye from my daughter's latest outburst. As I read I feel as though you have been living in my house the past years (so many I can't remember). My son aged 13 and my daughter aged 15 are all of the young people you describe. They are in every category: victims of domestic violence, under-responsible, over-entitled and living with a parent who is no more than a slave.

You have described exactly how I have parented up until now: I am the text book democratic parent. I treated my children as little adults from the time they were tiny, always explaining my decisions, giving opportunities to negotiate and have given them way too much input into decision making. They have always been able to voice an opinion, even in situations where they shouldn't have been involved (I know that now). My Mum says I have been **too** good to these children, losing my own identity in the process.

My house is an area of mass destruction not a sanctuary from the outside world. My everyday life is a battle of Iraqi proportions. I am living in a dictatorship where I have had no power at all. I have enabled my children to become tyrants, covering for them and bailing them out of trouble while they abuse me everyday. I drive them to soccer, pick them up from school, take them and their friend to the beach, and provide all the finances to maintain their above average lifestyle – the clothes, new surfboards, the latest and greatest of everything. I ask myself 'why?' most days. Is it that I have surrendered and it's just easier to take it, or do I actually believe that I am getting what I deserve (as they constantly tell me)? I have no idea how the last 17 years have led me here! To the outside world I have a responsible job working with children, I am actively involved in my community, an activist for children's rights to services, and appear to be perfectly sane. Yet I live in chaos that, now that I write it down, seems unbelievable even to me. I have taken today off work as it was all just a bit hard to deal with. I will sit and read your articles over and over again as I am having a window of clarity and need to find an end to the chaos that has become my existence. I don't know if this will ever reach you, if it does, great, if not it has still served as the very first time I have acknowledged to anyone the hidden battles I have faced everyday the past long years. Hopefully it will be therapeutic and empowering as I have nowhere to go but up from here.

Thank you for listening,
Sandra

Sent Next Day:

I am amazed how good it has made me feel that the world hasn't come to an end by talking about this problem. I awoke this morning with a feeling of power and that things may change. After my e-mail to you I have also let my family know what has been going on in my life all these years as up until now they have been getting the edited, glossed over, 'things are OK' version of events. I am hoping that the removal of the unspoken veil of secrecy that has protected everyone from the outside world knowing what goes on behind closed doors, may just tip the balance of power in my favour. In the past 24 hours all my siblings have phoned to offer support even though they are geographically removed, they are in shock as to what has been going on.

Regards, Sandra