## Actions shield abuse

DEAR ABBY: Please tell "Caught in the Middle," the mother of 15-yearold "Becky," that she needs to step in for her daughter's sake. The girl's overprotective father has gone off the deep end.

I was also raised by hyperprotective parents. When I was finally allowed to spread my wings, I went a little crazy. I wanted to catch up with my friends and see what I had been missing. The result was I became a mother at 18.

## abigail van buren dear abby

SMALL TOWN IN ILLINOIS DEAR S.T.: When I published that letter, the roof caved in. I received more than a thousand letters and e-

mails. Read on for a sample: DEAR ABBY: The only time I was let out of the house was to go to school. I wasn't allowed to have friends call me or even attend my own senior prom. The one time a boy did call, I got the silent treatment from my stepdad

for a week. I finally joined the Army to get away. I had my first date when I was 18.

The only difference between "Becky" and me is my stepfather was physically, emotionally and sexually abusing me. I am now 43 and have never married. I have a hard time trusting men. I can't stress enough how detrimental this situation can be for a young person. I'm living proof. TRYING TO TRUST AGAIN

DEAR TRYING: Thank you for an important letter. I'm sorry to say that at least one-third of those who wrote to comment on that letter had stories similar to yours.

DEARABBY: I spent several years in law enforcement and had the oppor-

among family members. One of the signs we noted, time and time again, was extreme "overprotectiveness" by the fathers who had abused their daughters. (Their motive was jealousy and paranoia that the child might reveal to their friends what was happening at home.) It might be advisable for that mother to look deeper into this.-CONCERNED IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR CONCERNED: I agree.

DEARABBY: I am a physician specializing in women's health and see many women who were sexually abused in childhood — unfortunately by their own fathers. I am concerned that Becky is being abused, and now that she has reached sexual maturity, he is making sure no one finds out. The tunity to investigate cases of incest type of jealousy described by "Caught

in the Middle" can be typical of these distorted, evil relationships. Please contact that girl's mother and express my concern. This is urgent. — CON-CERNED PHYSICIAN IN KEN-TUCKY

DEAR CONCERNED PHYSI-CIAN: The woman was afraid to give her name or address. I hope she sees this column.

DEAR ABBY: The same thing happened to me! I was young, sad, lonely, desperate and afraid. My father said if Itold, no one would believe me. I considered suicide. I was 17 when he died, and I was finally able to tell Mom. She was devastated, but she believed me. I have been in counseling for three

years. Many women in my support group tell the same story. Becky will

need counseling even if her father is NOT sexually abusing her. CORNELL, WIS., READER

DEAR READER: That may be true. The father may also need professional counseling even if he's not an abuser. In the words of C. Knight Aldrich, M.D., professor emeritus of psychiatry and family medicine at the University of Virginia School of Medicine: "One should not think that only fathers who are sexually abusing their daughters are overprotective. Sometimes overly conscientious parents are, too. The problem is, if parents are too rigid, their worst fears can turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy."

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21 Show       Showcase       Rachael Leigh Cook. iTV. ∩ 'PG-13' (Image: Constraint of the stress)       Mike Tyson is         22       TMC       (5:00) "Just One Night"       (:35) ★★ "Hackers" (1995, Drama) Jonny Lee Miller, Angelina Jolie, Jesse Bradford. ∩ (Image: Constraint of the stress)       ★½ "Scary M Shawn Wayan	safecracker is lured into a final heist. 'I ovie 2" (2001, Comedy) ★% "Killin	ing Me Softly"	• "The Price (:25) ★½ "Fa	Ward. iTV. A 'PG-13' @ alling Like This" (2000) Bri-	★ ★ ★ ½ "Ghost World" (2	001, Comedy-Drama) Thora	©
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45 FMC (:01) ★★★½ "3 Women" (1977) Sissy Spacek. (:05) ★★★ "Naked Lunch"	" (1991) Peter Weller. (:02) "Dar	mien: Omen II" 45 FMC	C (:01) * * "Love Potion N	lo. 9" (1992, Comedy)	(:01) "Revenge of the Ner	ds IV: Nerds in Love"	"Love-Splendored"
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