

Mom should respond to plea for help



abigail van buren

dear abby

DEAR ABBY: I disagree with the advice you gave to the girl who signed herself "Latchkey Kid in Seattle." While I agree that the last resort might be to find another adult the girl can stay with while her mom "entertains" her boyfriend/boss, her first step should be to try to solve the problem at home. A woman who devotes so much attention to her married boss at the expense of her

own daughter is losing a lot of herself and destroying any future relationship with the girl.

I say the girl should talk with her mother about her feelings first, and how they can best balance the needs of both of them. Single parents can be blind to how their actions affect their loved ones when they become focused on their own needs. Mom should be told by her daughter how much she is needed and how important it is for her to know that her

mom will be there for her. Companionship isn't the only issue here. The daughter needs her as a role model, parent and friend.

If Mom refuses to give her daughter the time and attention she so greatly deserves, then I say the daughter should seek help elsewhere. — MICHAEL M., TAMPA, FLA.

DEAR MICHAEL M.: The mother KNOWS what she's doing. The writer indicated that it happens regularly. That's why I told her to talk to her father or another adult relative, or parent of a friend, about spending time in another household while "Mom is out on her dates." However, from the responses I received about that letter, some read-

ers feel I wasn't hard enough on the mother. Read on:

DEAR ABBY: I am an art psychotherapist. Abandonment is the worst kind of mental and physical abuse. That mother should be reported as a child abuser. Instead of directing the child to family or friends' parents to watch over her, you should have told her to go to the father, school counselor or another trusted adult for help in getting out of this dangerous situation PERMANENTLY. I have seen the result of such neglect and abuse. It's horrible. Please advise other readers in similar situations that they don't have to be abused in this way. It could save a life. — SANDY IN SUNNYVALE, CALIF.

DEAR ABBY: I am a Department of Social Health Services worker in Washington state. It is against state law here to leave a child under the age of 12 alone without an appropriate caregiver. That child needs to talk to another adult or family member immediately, as you suggested. But not for a refuge while her mother is "otherwise occupied." She needs a safe, sane and loving home in which to live. If there is no family member she can talk to, she should talk to someone at her school. The schools are required to report instances of suspected child abuse/neglect to Child Protective Services for investigation. — CONCERNED IN VANCOUVER, WASH.

DEAR ABBY: I thought that as a parent you were supposed to put your child first. "Latchkey Kid's" mother is irresponsible, and her behavior shows concern for her needs only and none for her daughter. Maybe if Child Protective Services gets involved, the mother will get a wake-up call and go back to being the parent the girl deserves. — DISGUSTED IN TEXAS

DEAR ABBY: You missed the boat here. You should have advised "Latchkey Kid" to go over and hang out with Mom's boss's wife. She is obviously alone as often as "Latchkey" is — and she might appreciate the company! — SHANNON IN PORT CHARLOTTE, FLA.

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