



Dear Barry,

My father was emotional and physical abuse when I was growing up. He took his anger out on both my brother and me. The brunt of his abuse though was towards me, as I was not as athletic and popular as my brother. My parents are still together, and my brother has a tight relationship with them. I am now 40 years old, and have a hard time being around them.

Lately, I have had nightmares of the abuse and a lot of anger is coming up. When I have brought the abuse to my brother, he denies it ever happened. My mother does not want to talk about it, and tells me to get over it. She says that it was not so, and that my father was trying to make a man out of me. I have recapped many situations of being physically hit, slammed against the wall, called names and being told that I am worthless. Nobody will validate what I went through, and said that I was a difficult child.

Both my mother and brother have tried to encourage me to have a relationship with my father. He is in total denial like the rest of my family. He says he loves me and is proud of the man I have become. I still cannot forgive him for what he did.

How do I get pass this and embrace my family like they want me to.

Signed - The Abused

Dear The Abused,

Many kids are abused by one or both parents. Even if only one parent is doing the abuse, the other parent – in this case, your mom- is as responsible for the abuse as your dad. As a parent, she had the responsibility of protecting you and removing you from the situation. By her staying in the marriage and not protecting her children, she also needs to take responsibility.

Unfortunately, nobody in your family even wants to acknowledge that it happened. That is not uncommon in many families. You are being told that it was your fault by being a difficult child. That is a sad statement. You were different than your brother, and they could not accept that.

What most abused victims want is just the acknowledgement that it happened and an apology. Since your family will not validate you, but say they are proud of you and love you, I would find a way to work through the childhood issues with a good therapist. You should start to connect with your inner child, start to give him the love and protection he needs with proper boundaries in your life. Then, I would write a letter to your dad from the voice of the child and tell him that you are taking back the power you continue to give him over your life. You do not need to send the letter. From here, set the boundaries that work for you in regard to being a part of your family

Hopefully, your father has changed, and if so, you might be able to build a healthy relationship with him.

Barry