

"Depressed When My Kids Were Young. Now They Blame Me for Everything"

My three children lived in a chaotic childhood seeing me depressed on and off. I was molested when I was young and told by my mother not to tell anyone. As a result I have struggled with depression all of my life as a result. I was a very nurturing mother and even overprotective because I wanted to be a better mother than mine. I was told by my parents to make the marriage work so I stayed for way too long in the marriage. Divorce was frowned upon. There were many good times but also many bad times.

Now one of my estranged daughters is blaming me for staying in the marriage and that is the reason she has problems in her relationships with men. They treat me like their father, taking advantage of me and walking over me. Only want me around when they need something.

When I try to stand up to

them they get angry and then have nothing to do with me.

It is difficult for me not to feel guilty for what they were put through but at the same time I cannot change the past. I did what I knew best at the time. How do I deal with them when they keep blaming me for the past?

ANSWER: I'm very sorry for what you've been through both as a child and then with your own children. It's very traumatizing when parents don't believe a young child's statements about being molested or tell them that they have to protect the molester. It affects their ability to trust their own perceptions, their instincts, or to feel entitled to protect themselves from destructive people, sometimes including their grown children.

It's also very painful to later be blamed by your own children for things that you have so much pain around. Typically that doesn't bring out the best in any of us. Your daughter's accusations that her problems stem from what she observed in your home may be right and it may be wrong. Either way, you're better off accepting some responsibility and trying to make amends without too much defending of yourself. On the other hand, if they walk all over you, it may mean that you will have to get more lovingly assertive and tolerate the pain of their not spending time with you when you stand up for yourself. That said, I would stand up for myself not so much in defense of the past, but more in relation to how they treat you in the present.

