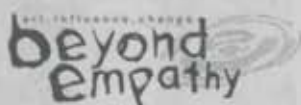


Battle of wills over alcohol at university



'IN MY shoes' is a serial story written as part of Armidale's Just One Less project. Just One Less is a robust and sometimes confronting community conversation

that seeks to raise awareness about: alcohol and its place in our community; risk-taking behaviour in young people; why some young people fare better than others; and what inspires parents to become positive role models.

Just One Less is a project run by Beyond Empathy, an Armidale based arts organisation (www.beyondempathy.org.au). Through this project Beyond Empathy has focussed on highlighting the things that connect us and not those that divide us.

During the process of discovering stories in our community it seems to Beyond Empathy that home is a recurrent theme, or possibly an antidote, for all of these complex issues around alcohol.

Beyond Empathy will share some excerpts from a family dealing with issues arising from alcohol each week in the *Express Extra*.

You may connect with this story or you may not, but before you judge, try to walk in their shoes.

The story so far...

Jess has just started uni and her dad is worried she is partying too hard, given high school issues with alcohol and parties. She wants to leave the past behind and move on. Her dad offers help if she has problems – after asking if she is drunk ...

Dad, are you serious? You're such a hypocrite. I wouldn't have had half the problems I did without you.

Jess,

You've got to stop blaming other people for your problems. I certainly didn't force you into underage drinking! I lost count of how many times the police picked you up and brought you home. Remember when they found you unconscious in the park dead drunk? The times your mum and I thought you were fast asleep and you'd snuck out the window. And you wonder why we worry about you at uni? Everyone knows what the drinking culture is like there. We feel so helpless this far away and worried about you.

Love, Dad

Dad,

You are such a self righteous, two-faced prig. You with the secret bottles in your study. You always had work to do in there, didn't you? You really thought I'd sleep through all the shouting and arguments? That I don't know about your problem? I don't want to talk about this, dad.

Jess

Jess,

I have no idea what you are talking about or what this problem you think I have is. Are you coping with uni? It's okay, you can tell us if you're not. I'm worried about you. I've tried to call you, but your phone is off. I will try again later.

Love, Dad

Mum,

Dad's driving me crazy. I can't stand it. I can't deal with him at the moment. Can you tell him to back off? It's probably a good thing it's so late and all the bottle shops are closed, as I really feel like a strong drink right now. Got an assignment due tomorrow and now I can't think straight. Damn him!

Love, Jess

To be continued next week ...