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Emails paint image of stressed family



'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.

Through this project, Armidale-based arts organisation Beyond Empathy (www.beyondempathy.org.au) has focused on highlighting the things that connect us and not those that divide us.

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. They argue, with dad reminding her of her problems with underage drinking and Jess reminding him of his own 'secret' drinking. Jess appeals to her mum to get her dad to give her some space.

Dear Jess,

I hope you're feeling better today. Mum told me you had an assignment due. I've put \$100 in your account, so when it's submitted, go and treat yourself to something nice.

Love, Dad

Dear Jess,

How did you go with the assignment? I'm sure you're very busy, but drop me a line and let me know how things are going.

Love, Dad

Jessica,

Stop ignoring me and either answer your phone or reply to

my emails. This childish behaviour is ridiculous.

Dad

Dad,

Been busy with assignments. All's going well. I'm going to spend some time at a friend's place in the break, but will catch up with you and mum in the last week.

Love, Jess

Jessica,

You need to come home as soon as your exams are finished. There are serious matters we need to discuss.

Dad

Dad,

Don't be so melodramatic. I've spoken to mum and she says everything is fine. I agree we have a serious matter to discuss – your drinking problem. I'm sick of you pretending it doesn't exist and doesn't affect everyone else. We all know.

See you soon,

Jess

Jessica,

I've had enough of you projecting your problems onto me. So much, that I'm coming down to see you, so we can sort this out – with professional help if need be.

Dad

Dad,

I've got exams. Please just wait until they're over. Then we can talk.

Jess

Mum,

Dad says he's coming here. Can you stop him please? I really can't deal with him in the middle of exams!

Love, Jess

To be continued next week ...