

Dear Mom,

I love you so much. You are definitely one of the people that I look up to the most, but you have also hurt me in a lot of ways. I have spent too much time acting as your friend, your confidant, and your counselor. There have been many so many times where I have been the one to be the mother, so many times where I was confronting you for your actions. It has been hard, uncomfortable, and often awkward for me as you have put me in that role. I needed you to find your sanity somewhere else, with someone else; I needed you to process your life with someone else. It was not my job and it is not my job.

I really struggle now with what it means to be a woman because you have painted it to be a burden. Children are a burden, cooking is a burden, cleaning is a burden, and running a house is a burden. Reminding yourself sarcastically that children are a blessing from God every time one of us messed up has not been helpful. Children are a blessing from God. Growing up, you have showed me that being a mother and a wife have trapped you and kept you from living your dreams. I haven't had anyone model to me what it looks like to be a strong, confident woman. Because of all of your issues with your mother, you were never able to find out who you were, and you still haven't. And though you have pushed me to find who I am, to know my own identity, it's been hard not having ever had it modeled to me.

I want to reaffirm that I love you, but I am not responsible for you. I am your daughter, not your counselor, not your friend, and certainly not God. And I pray that God heals my image of what it means to be a woman. Being a mother and wife is not a burden; it is a blessing. I pray too that you are able to find healing and that you are able to find who you are in God.

With much hope for healing,

Dear Dad,

I have been so grateful for your peace and optimism in our home. You helped to bring stability. But you were gone so much. I understand that you love your job, but we needed so much more from you.

There was so much that mom needed from you that you weren't able to give her. You give so much at work and then when you come home, you're spent. She was so sick and so messed up and for so long you just couldn't deal with it. She needed you to help support her dreams and to help her discover where she fit. She needed you to help her with us.

We needed you to be our spiritual leader in the home. Mom did a great job praying with us and teaching us the Bible, but where were you during all of that? Why didn't you step in as the spiritual leader of the house? Why didn't you teach us all of the things God had put in you? We only got to see that in church. Dan and I were so hungry to go deeper.

We needed you to encourage us not just for things we did, but for who we were. We were always rewarded by you for things we did, but you never spent time with us individually just because you wanted to be with us. It's no wonder we're so achievement oriented. We needed affirmation from you. We also needed to see that it was not weakness for a man to be soft and encouraging. I am to the place now where I have a hard time not laughing when a guy says nice things to me because it seems so sappy, because I am so hard. It is normal for guys to be gentle though, to be encouraging and to be sweet. I know that you have been able to do a better job of this with mom, but the boys and I really needed this from you too.

And I needed your help at home when mom got sick. It never should have been my responsibility to run the home and to take care of the boys. You were always at church though. You just couldn't do it all. I understand that you were overwhelmed, but we needed you. I am not responsible for the well being of my entire family.

You have not given us a good example of the man's role in the home. You work and you come home and relax. You don't do chores, with the exception of snow blowing, which you like to do, you never took care of us when we were sick, you don't do any cooking or dishes and you've always just delegated the work. It's been mom's job to do everything. You haven't stood up as the spiritual leader; that was mom's responsibility too. You were just fun. What have the boys learned from that? They have no sense of responsibility about cleaning up – it's mom's job. As I look to my life in the future, I have mixed feelings about marriage and parenting because I do not want to be abandoned with the full responsibility of running a home and raising children. It's supposed to be a team effort, not just something that mom does. Just as I am praying for healing in my view of the role of a woman, I am praying for healing in my views of the role of a man. I will not be abandoned in the home to do it all myself.

And so I say good bye to the responsibility I took to run our family. I'm saying good bye to the need to find value and love in my achievements. I am saying good bye to the roles of man and woman that you and mom have modeled, and am saying hello to a healthy balance. I am praying for the Holy Spirit to renew and transform my mind and the life of our family.

Your daughter,