

## Figone: Deadbeat dad causes family grief

Contributed by Terry Figone  
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What do you do when you daughter is married to an abuser, then finally finds the courage to leave him, only to have the abuse continue?

This is a struggle no one should have to face alone or otherwise. So as a parent you try to help any way you can.

For the last 10 months, my daughter has struggled through the court system. It's like swimming up stream in a raging river full of debris, first fighting for custody of her two children and then financial support. She waited several months before the financial part was ever addressed. I guess since lawyers are getting their money, why worry. Don't even get me started on that subject (I've spent thousands)!

During that time my husband and I bought groceries and paid bills that had been left unpaid (some for awhile) when my daughter's husband left. He had removed her from all accounts several years earlier. She was by all intents penniless. Not once at any time did he call and ask about food, heat, etc. There were two children in the house. At one point in January there was no heat for a week, before she asked for help. Before that she would leave the heat off unless the kids were home and then they bundled up. This made me heartsick; to think my child was ever married to someone like this.

After several months my daughter found a job to replace her part-time job. Her new employers have been very kind and extremely supportive. May I say she loves her job with a capital 'L'?

She was finally awarded monthly support to which back support was added. A small portion was tacked on to current monthly payments. This amounted to about \$1,500 a month. In the four months since the judgment, he has paid one full support payment and three partial payments and now nothing. He does not respond to Child Support Services to which the case was turned over. This seems to be his M.O. We have even gotten calls regarding collection accounts (evidently he gave our phone number) and my daughter receives collections calls constantly. I guess he thinks if he doesn't respond they will give up.

Buy the way, did I mention he owns a business BUT he claims he's disabled with an arm injury; he's paid cash when working, isn't this illegal? However, he goes boating and kneeboards (don't you have to hold onto a rope that pulls you up?), he plays baseball too, all the while collecting disability. He moved into a larger house on a golf course ... in essence, his life has not changed.

His abusive behavior has not changed, only his address. This is only the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

My grandchildren are going to counseling because of the trauma of divorce, plus things that are said to them about their mother. My daughter had to take him to court to get an order for the therapist. My granddaughter seems to be his main target; she is constantly worried about something happening to her mother. He finally decided to agree to therapy.

And his manipulation continues.

Today, for me the final straw broke this camel's back! My daughter called sobbing; the accountant for her work told her that her wages were being garnished because her ex had failed to report a retirement (401k?) account he cashed in 2004. They can't find him (he lives in the same community), so they settled for the next best person. As, I stated before, he doesn't respond to any agency.

Did I mention that he stated in court that he hadn't filed business taxes EVER because he and his partner were saving monies for a 'nest egg' ... honest, it's court-documented!

But I digress. I was so angry that I called his cell phone, I knew he didn't have the courage to answer, so I left a terse message stating that I thought he was a coward, not a man and that everything he has put my daughter through should come back to him and he could choke on it. That really is the gist of the message, no foul language etc., but I was so angry I was shaking and I had to let him know what human waste he is. You probably think that was a bit childish; but I have not spoken to him since prior to the divorce proceedings and I just could not hold back any longer. He has deliberately set out to not only emotionally ruin my daughter, but financially too. He has an agenda.

I have tons of scenarios that go through my head daily. I would say my fantasy life about body parts falling off is pretty graphic. But as I have said many times, he isn't worth going to jail for. I will only say, he is a product of his upbringing!

You may be thinking, why doesn't she stop bitching and just pay the tax? Well, I've paid a lot of his past bills over the months just so my daughter could stay in a house that went into foreclosure because he stopped paying the house payments, her car was repossessed, light bills, water, gas were unpaid and the list goes on. That's why!

Where to go from here? Well, one day at a time I guess. My daughter is calling the tax board to hopefully work something out. I pray they will work with her. She was raised with a conscience and a set of morals that her ex was not, that is evident in everything he has done. So whatever comes, she'll do the right thing.

But the big question is: Why isn't anyone or any agency going after the person who committed these problems? The answer: Well, it depends on whom you are talking to. Does the government really want to waste manpower looking into a deadbeat father? Or is it easier to go after someone who is in the working community and only trying to stay off welfare and make a good life for her and her children?

Time and many phone calls will tell. If my daughter cannot resolve this, she may have to consider quitting her job and go on welfare, adding to the list of state dependents. As I said, she loves her job and would truly hate to quit. But how can she survive on maybe \$800 a month when her rent is \$1,100? We also helped her get into that.

While sitting in court and listening to many cases eerily similar to my daughter's, I have to question: What's going on? Is this a case of a 'boys will be boys' attitude? Are there so many of these so-called men that,

once out the door, their responsibilities are over? Is this another societal (patriarchal) way to keep women in their place? Are the courts so overflowing with this type of behavior that they have become complacent, jaded or just too overworked?

There are more and more women with children living below poverty level, and no one seems to be concerned. It's easier to say she's lazy or wants a free ride, instead of acknowledging that most women have either stayed home to care for their children and/or they worked part-time and were out of the job force. I haven't meet any yet that likes being on welfare.

A woman makes 60 cents to every dollar a man makes. Childcare is cost prohibitive in many cases. So what are the options?

How do the courts make the husband/father take care his responsibilities to his family? There is the Deadbeat Dad law, but that doesn't always work, it can take months or years to catch up with him and sometimes never.

Is there some kind of manual out there that sells for \$2.50 that explains in 30 words or less "How To Be A Deadbeat And Get Away With It"?

This, unfortunately, is only a small portion of my daughter's story. And the saga continues.

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