

Parents, caregivers need care, too

Dear Annie: I have a 31-year-old son who has always struggled with mental illness issues. He was diagnosed with depression at age 15 and again in his early 20s when we sent him to a weeklong involuntary residential treatment. He will not stay on medication or go to counseling.

In the meantime, after years of not being able to keep a job, he finally had a good job for two years, which he lost 16 months ago. He moved in with us 10 months ago and has made no effort to search for another job. We gave him a deadline to get a job or move out, because we are nearing retirement age and cannot continue to pay for his living expenses, his car insurance and other bills that come up. It is obvious that he is not going to get a job. We do not want him to be homeless. He has been there before, and I know the outlook on homelessness and those with mental illness is not good. However, we can't continue to enable him. He can function. What should we do? — *Parents at a Crossroads*

Dear Parents: I am so sorry that you and your family are struggling with the ongoing battle that is mental illness. As painful as it can be to draw boundaries with our adult children, you said it best: To continue paying all of his living expenses at this point would be to enable him. If he is capable of working, as you stated, then a job could not only help stabilize his housing and finances; it could help with his mental health. Humans thrive with routine.

So let your son know that you will always unconditionally offer your love,

but you can't continue to offer your money. If he is at a loss as to how to get back into the workforce, you can point him toward Individual Placement and Support (<https://ipsworks.org>). The National Alliance on Mental Illness states that IPS "can help people with mental illness find and keep meaningful jobs, supporting their mental health recovery."

And lest you think you're alone in this, please read on.

Dear Annie:

I've read letters in your column from parents at their wits' end regarding children's behavior, whether they're adolescents or adults.

My son has a personality disorder, and I often have found myself exasperated. I had to call the police twice and take him to the ER once. And I've done a lot of praying. I talk to him every night and tried to encourage him. I am always bending over backward. It has been very difficult.

Many things have worked out well for him that previously were sources of stress. We are all still working on it. I'm very thankful to God and my relatives, who gave my son much needed social support. I encourage parents who have written to you in similar situations to keep praying and to contact NAMI. I have done that in the past. And ask family and friends if they can help. — *S.B.*

Dear S.B.: I'm printing your letter because it touches on such an important point: As important as it is to set boundaries, it's equally important to reach out to others for support. Caregivers need care given to them, too.

DEAR ANNIE



ANNIE LANE
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Photos by Katherine Lacaze

Seaside High School students practice a song during band class, which is held during first period throughout the year.

Band: Includes 93 young musicians

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Plus, since band meets during first period, "it's a nice start to the day," junior Briana Boyd, who plays flute and piccolo, said.

Opportunities

In addition to the symphonic band, Seaside also has a pep band and jazz band, which involves the same students playing different types of songs. The jazz band includes 17 dedicated students who commit to attending practice at 7:15 a.m. throughout the week. They are introduced to different techniques and a style that incorporates more improvisation and soloing.

"That part to me is very fun, to see people get more confident doing that kind of thing," Dahlgren said.

The jazz band plays at various community functions in addition to the school's concerts. They were



Students who are in the symphonic band also partake in the pep band, and 17 students also play in the jazz band.

featured artists at the Seaside Jazz Festival in the past, and in January of this year, they performed a joint concert with the North Coast Big Band at the Times Theatre.

The pep band attends games, assemblies and other activities where school spirit

is highlighted, playing popular songs and familiar movie soundtracks. That band's focus is "trying to add to the atmosphere of the event," Dahlgren said.

The students like the varied types of ensembles offered.

Boyd enjoys playing the different styles of music. While the competition pieces are more challenging, pushing her to work harder and reap a greater sense of achievement, the pep band songs are fun and familiar.

"They're enjoyable in different ways," she said. "You feel the reward when you're doing the hard stuff, but when you're doing the easier stuff, it's just fun to play."

Mace also doesn't feel daunted by challenging songs but appreciates the process of taking steps to improve.

That persistence and commitment is something encouraged by Dahlgren and his style of instruction, which facilitates "the idea of not being good at something and being okay with that, because you can make a roadmap," Mace said, adding, "That's an enjoyable thing to be around and in class with."

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