

Setting

Act II, Scene 3 (AHN) — Six years later

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This party marks Stephanie's 23rd birthday and she has brought her boyfriend, Zack Bloom. Zack and Stephanie know each other from high school, and Zack has had a troubled past. He went to juvie several times for drug-related offenses and assault. While he hasn't been arrested since he turned 18, Barbara and Charles are not certain they trust his claims of being clean. There were rumors that he was dealing serious drugs to his classmates, and even that he was part of a gang. His tattoos and shaved head don't make him easy to trust.

After having her driver's license revoked and doing several weeks of community service following her drunk driving incident, Stephanie started pulling her act together. When William died of a sudden heart attack a few years ago, Stephanie used a chunk of her inheritance to go to community college, and then went on to begin an accounting degree at a state university. She will be graduating this winter and has been doing well in her classes.

She ran into Zack at the supermarket and they began reminiscing about high school. Soon enough they were dating, and now, almost six months later, they have come to this party to announce their engagement. While Charles has his concerns, he is mostly just happy to see Stephanie moving on with her life, but Barbara is worried. She's afraid that Zack could pull Stephanie off the successful path she seems to have found. Barbara is particularly concerned that Zack might still be dealing, and that this could set Stephanie up for a relapse.

Barbara Gardener

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You're worried about your daughter, Stephanie. Of course, you're almost always worried about your daughter, but this time it's different. She's been seeing this Zack for almost six months now and you're concerned that the two of them are getting serious. While Stephanie has had a number of relationships before now, many of which troubled you, Zack's history is horrible. You don't want your daughter getting seriously involved with someone who sold cocaine to kids in high school!

Since her uncle William passed away a few years ago, Stephanie has gone to college and should be getting a degree this winter. You're terrified that Zack will lead her down a very dark path, throwing away her future. When you, Charles, and William decided not to pull strings to let Stephanie off light for her first DUI, she got her act together and has largely kept it together. Being a tough parent may be difficult, but it works with Stephanie.

You need to straighten your daughter out, however rough it will be in the short term. You love her and you need her to realize that she can't have bad influences like Zack around. He's no good for her and if she doesn't make the changes in her life that need to be made, she's going to wind up in a very bad place in the years to come.