



# The Full Effects of Alcoholism

By Sophia Sperber

When looking back on memories of my dad, I often feel conflicted. The dad I prefer to remember was fun-loving, caring, and humorous. However, memories of this part of my dad are often overshadowed by memories of his alcoholism. Memories of a dad who was not present in the moment, of a dad who would pass out on the couch after drinking too much, and of a dad I was uncomfortable being around are often what I remember the most when I think of my dad. If the situation had been handled differently I might not have to rely on old memories just to see my dad.

I remember being in fifth grade when my dad's trips to the "beer store", as he called it, became increasingly frequent. My younger sister and I would sit in the car and impatiently wait as my dad took what felt like hours to shop before emerging from the store with vodka he had just purchased. He would then take the bottles home, walk down the stairs into our basement, and drink them by himself. This act became routine, until trips to the "beer store" were taken twice a week. As soon as I became aware of my dad's drinking, I was immediately

bothered by it. My dad was a different person when he drank. His kind and loving personality hardened to resemble a gruffer, meaner version of the man who had raised me. I frequently begged my dad to stop drinking. Every time I made this request, he responded by promising he would quit. I could rely on this promise being broken within the next few days following my request.

My parents had a pretty normal marriage. They rarely argued, but when they did, it was about unimportant things. After these small confrontations, they were quick to forgive each other. This balance was thrown out when my dad started drinking. The arguing increased in both frequency and intensity. One of the main things they argued about was my dad's drinking.

Almost every day after school for me and work for my parents, my mom would come home, go downstairs, and argue with my dad for what seemed like hours on end. After at least two years of this, my dad moved out. I had just watched alcohol ruin my parent's relationship.

It was in middle school that I saw the full effects of alcoholism. My dad

had developed type II diabetes, and his health was rapidly declining due to the repercussions of his drinking problem. In January of my seventh-grade year my dad went into cardiac arrest in a liquor store, was taken by ambulance to the hospital, and passed away.

Looking back on this situation, I see many instances in which I could have intervened. I am unsure of how effective my interventions would have been in this case. My mom pleaded with my dad in order to get him to try quitting drinking, or attend rehab, however, her attempts never worked. I think this is because alcoholism is a disease and for people who are addicted alcohol may not be a choice. At the time of my dad's addiction I was in elementary and middle school and I was, therefore, too young to fully understand my dad's situation and to understand ways to stop this problem. Had I been older at the time I would have been relentless in expressing my disapproval of my dad's drinking.

Something that I learned from this situation is that action—especially early action—is necessary when dealing with addiction. If we had caught this problem earlier my dad might still be here today. If we had been more aggressive in fighting this problem, my dad might have been able to attend my high school graduation or any of my other significant life events in the future. I also learned that alcohol has serious repercussions that people often do not plan on facing. Seeing my dad struggle for years on end has made me have a cautious outlook when it comes to anything involving alcohol. When offered alcohol, I decline.

With increased intervention from me and my family members my dad might still be alive. With increased intervention, I might have more memories of my dad, memories that do not involve alcohol. ❌

## ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Sophia Sperber is a recent high school graduate from Idaho. *Alert Magazine* congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.