



What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger

By Miriam Damasco

I'VE ALWAYS been a reserved person. Ever since I was little, I've always tried to be the strong one in any given situation. I figured if I made everyone see I was tough, nobody could hurt me. But I was wrong.

My father is a heavy smoker and was a heavy drinker. Last November my family was invited to a party, but I wasn't feeling well, so I left early. Later that night, my mother called and said my dad had been drinking and that he walked home. Right away, I had a bad feeling. She told me to make sure that he made it home. I peeked out the window and saw my dad stumbling down the driveway. I went to help him get into the house, and I noticed tears rolling down his face. At that point, I really didn't know what to do.

As we struggled to get into the house, my dad kept saying he was in pain. I asked him where the pain was, but he couldn't respond. Minutes later, he collapsed onto the floor. I immediately helped him up. When I sat him on the couch, all I saw was this blank, dead look as tears streamed down his puffy cheeks. I walked him to the bathroom to clean him up, and he just stared. There was a moment of silence that sent chills down my back. The silence was finally broken by him asking me, "This isn't right, is it?"

Back in the living room, I tried to talk with him, but there were no responses. All I saw was that cold, blank stare, which made me cry and feel helpless. Then my mother came in to me on my knees, holding my dad's hand, in tears. She froze at the door when she saw the condition he was in. She took a deep breath and simply told me to go get cleaned up while she put my father to bed. I headed to the bathroom as slowly as I could, not wanting to leave his side.

Then I heard this loud, non-stop coughing. I realized it was my dad, who suddenly started choking. I ran back to him, and I saw his face literally turn purple. Once the choking stopped, he gasped and his head fell back. I could feel my face turn pale, and my only thought was, "He's dead."

About ten seconds later he began to spit up, and my mom began to vomit. I rushed into the kitchen and got napkins to clean him up. My mom took over right away. I was devastated by the whole situation. I remember picking up the phone and rushing outside for some fresh air. I didn't know who to call. I tried my brother, but there was no answer. I dialed my sister's number, but the ringing seemed eternal. When she finally answered, I couldn't speak. I was choking on my own words. My

family rushed over as soon as possible.

I walked back inside to find my dad unconscious in front of the door. He stared slowly regaining consciousness, so we tried getting him up, but all he did was push us aside and told us he could do it himself. People then began coming into my house. I heard my mom and sister telling them to get me out of there. While struggling to get my dad into the car to take him to the hospital, I caught his fall, and when he looked at me, it was like he was apologizing. At the hospital the doctor said his bones were very weak due to the alcohol and lack of calcium. Thankfully, my dad finally realized that it wasn't worth giving his life up for alcohol.

Since this event, I've had trouble sleeping, I'm very paranoid, and I've been overwhelmed with anxiety. Hearing my mother say it wouldn't surprise her if one day she woke up to a dead body lying next to her made me realize just how much alcoholism has hurt my family.

As chapter president of Idaho Drug Free Youth, I've learned a tremendous amount about substance abuse and how to prevent myself, and others, from repeating the destructive patterns of addiction. I've also learned how to express and process my fears and emotions with others, and in group sessions. Attending several IDFY leadership retreats has blessed me with tools and skills I never imagined possible. I choose to break the cycle of violence that addiction promotes, and I choose a drug and alcohol free lifestyle. Addiction is insanity. People don't realize that their addiction not only destroys them, but everyone around them. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger, and I believe life is definitely worth living! 🙌

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Miriam Damasco is a recent high school graduate from Glenns Ferry, ID. 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.