



# Drugs and Alcohol Can Tear Families Apart

By Isabelle Nielsen

This story starts when I was 15 months old. My father was a heavy alcoholic, my mom a drug addict. Mom was at work, and my older sister who was about 11 1/2 at the time was at school. My dad and I were at left home. My dad turned on the TV and gave me a snack. After I fell asleep he saw this as an opportunity to have a drink or two. We lived in a high crime area. So when my dad, drunk, left he forgot to close the door. Our security alarm went off. The company called the house. No answer. They waited 10 minutes, called again. When no one answered the company called the police. The police showed up to find me red-faced and screaming in my crib. My dad showed up an hour later totally wasted. My dad was charged with child endangerment.

When I was four my mom kicked my dad out of the house. He had gotten drunk and broke down a door in the house out of anger because he couldn't figure out how to unlock it.

After that he drank a little less but not much. When I would go stay with him on the weekends he tried his hardest not to drink around me. I still cringed at the collection of bottles in the garage.

When I was 11 years old, my mom and I moved away from my hometown. We moved to a different state so my mom could be closer to family. At this point in time I didn't know my mom was an addict. She hid it well. My mom was a pharmacist and would work late leaving me home alone for hours at a time. Because of her addiction she was always agitated. She would come home and yell at me for everything and anything. She said some hurtful things. Then she would go to her room and lock herself in there for a bit then would come out and apologize. I don't know what happened in that time, but I can assume.

I learned about my mom's addiction a few months after we had moved. She got fired after she failed a drug test. My

mom told me it was a one-time thing and she just happened to get caught. I didn't believe her, it all had started to fall into place. Her mood swings, her locking herself in her room, the countless pill bottles. I never told her I knew she was lying. About a year or two later my mom met my step dad. My step dad at this point had been clean for 5 years. He introduced my mom to a program called NA. Now my mom has been clean for almost 6 years, my step dad over 10 years.

At age 15 I took two days' worth of my medication instead of the safe dosage. That day went by a blur but it was amazing. That night I realized what I had done, I was horrified. So I went and found a pill bottle of large pills that looked like if I took a few it would kill me. That was the plan. I sat in my room and cried. I told my friends goodbye, but one of them called the cops. I fell asleep before I could take the pills.

Both drugs and alcohol have affected my life in different ways. Alcohol is what caused me to grow up in a home without a father. Alcohol caused my life to fall apart. Drugs caused me to be scared of my own mother. She was sweet as sugar once she had her fix, and scary as the monster under the bed when she needed more. I never knew how the day was going to go. I developed anxiety and depression disorders. Drugs and alcohol forced me to grow up faster than anything. I never really got to be a kid.

Today I am 17, in six months I'll be 18. I, Isabelle J. Nielsen will never do recreational drugs or drink. I've seen how it can hurt people, ruin relationships, and tear families apart. 🙏

## ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Isabelle Nielsen is a recent high school graduate from Minnesota. *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.