



Drugs Took Away My Mother

By
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MY mother was at one point in her life a very successful woman; a loving wife and mother who worked as a secretary. Unfortunately I never had the chance to see this side of her. She was on drugs for as long as I could remember. A back injury came with innumerable pain pills, leading my mother to become dependent on them. When she started drinking excessively along with taking prescription pills, she stopped caring about anything. This is a story about how drugs and alcohol took away my mother.

The catalyst was a back injury caused from a mishap with a printer at her job. I was two years old at the time. Three surgeries later and she was on the expected cocktail of narcotics that someone with such a large injury gets. Workmen's compensation checks meant she didn't have to function like a normal member of society anymore. Three surgeries became five surgeries and the flow of pills into our household never ceased. It never felt like I had a mother because she was always in a stupor. My father was forced to assume the role of both parents because my mother simply would not. She became a danger to everyone because she would be so mentally gone that she would forget she was smoking, causing constant fire hazard and burn marks on everything.

I would wake up to go to kindergarten and on most days she would be passed out somewhere in the kitchen. Something that sounds unlivable to most people became an unquestionable reality for me.

She started drinking heavily when I was around nine years old. She would drink copious amounts of alcohol as well as taking her prescription pain medication while my father was at work. The fighting would start immediately after he got home. My mother became violent when she drank, the worst fight I remember was a screaming match that ended up with the Christmas tree being knocked over onto my father. What was already an awkward stage in my life was made even more godawful by my situation at home. Only a select few of my closest friends knew about my mother's problems, and they were all sworn to secrecy. On the rare occasion I got to go over to a friend's house, I would watch in amazement at how their family interacted. There were so many opportunities I missed out on as an adolescent all due to my mother's drug problem. She would get drunk so she wouldn't have to drive me anywhere, causing me to miss important things like band concerts or school functions. I was forced to grow up fast and strong because of the circumstanc-

es and constantly having to pretend everything was okay at school. My father tried so hard to make my life the best he could, but it was still hell because of my mom's addictions.

Two weeks before I turned thirteen years old I found my mother's dead body at her computer desk. My life became a whirlwind of people asking me if I was okay and going to funeral homes and people forcing their condolences on me. No one knew how she died, but we all had our ideas. The toxicology report confirmed everyone's suspicions. The phrase "accidental overdose" still haunts me to this day. There was no alcohol in her system, however it no doubt contributed to her carelessness towards what she was putting in her body. School became my only escape because my grades were the only things in my life I could control. When you're twelve years old, you never think about your parents dying. Five years later, at seventeen years old, I still can't wrap my head around how quickly drugs and alcohol led to my mother's death.

Had my mother not been addicted to drugs, I would have gotten to see the version of her that I hear stories about, and gotten to have a childhood. I would have never had to see the woman that brought me into this world carried out of my house in a body bag. I don't want anybody to ever have to experience the turmoil I have had to go through or to have such a wonderful life go downhill like my mother's did. My mother's untimely death is why I am so passionate about preventing drug abuse before it starts. None of my friends or people I associate with use drugs, and I'm sure my experiences have something to do with that. If drug prevention is taken more seriously, stories that could have been like mine could be happy. If I can prevent one person from having to deal with what I went through, I will feel my goal here has been accomplished. ☹️

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Shannon Holmberg is a high school senior 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.