



Addiction and the Options

By Brooke Larsen

Addiction has no specific target. Everyone is a potential target. The likelihood that someone you know struggles with it is high. My dad struggled with it because of his accident resulting in me making the difficult decision: help or not.

My dad, a lot can be said about him. He is a complex person, with very thick onion like layers of personality. Growing up I don't have many fun memories of him considering he worked nonstop. My dad was working at a local bar and grill in Moorhead, Minnesota cleaning above a fryer when a rug slipped from underneath him and his arm plunged into hot oil. Luckily, he was still holding a cleaning pad and his hand was unharmed. The forearm however, wasn't as fortunate. Third degree burns now worked its way, eating at the skin that once occupied the area. Many in-home nurses, Essentia stays, and appointments later, my dad was sent to the hospital of all hospitals: The Mayo Clinic. There my dad stayed for almost a whole summer getting nonstop care and surgeries to hopefully solve the problem. Finally, my dad underwent another surgery; the biggest one yet. This one was a last hope for the doctors. The surgery involved relocating a section of skin from one area on my dad to the

wound. It was a success and we were thankful he would be able to continue with his life. Amongst the pros of the surgery there was a con as well.

The one outcome no one saw coming was now my dad's next big challenge. Narcotic addiction. Throughout the last 4 years my dad became accustomed to taking large milligrams of narcotics. Pain pills are a very addictive substance and this was a concern of my mother's for a while due to the past alcohol abuse my dad experienced in his younger 20's and 30's. Sadly, no one believed her. Even I must admit at first, I was skeptical too. In 2014 I experienced my first surgery. I had torn my meniscus in my right knee cheerleading. I was given strong pain pills to help combat the pain. My mom told me to keep a record of when I was taking my medicine so I would know when to retake them. Over the course of trying to recuperate from the surgery I realized my medicine becoming scarcer. This was the moment we all started noticing weird behavior from my dad. Not only was my medicine going missing but my mother's as well. We hosted many interventions confronting my dad with the problem. Nodding his head and agreeing that he *will work on it* was all we would hear. My family was beginning to tear apart.

My grandparents resented my mother, my parents fought all the time (resulting in divorce), and my brother and I received weird amounts of pity from relatives that we didn't want. One day I had enough, I had just arrived home and noticed my dad was high as normal. I ordered him to pack his things. Once all packed into my little car I gave him the option of either a rehab center or his parents. He chooses his parents and that's exactly where he went. There I gave them strict directions to watch him carefully, take him to regular therapy, and work with him to push through this addiction.

Through many months of therapy my dad finally recognized the addiction and chose to stop to regain his life. My dad now has a full-time job, a new car, house, and all around a better relationship with my brother and me. I learned through this experience that addiction can happen to anyone. I also learned that sometimes you need to do what seems harsh for them to get help. What others should take away from this is even if you're young (like I was), you can still help. In my eyes no one was trying to help him so I did. Even to this day my dad thanks me for saving his life. It wasn't easy for me to do that and it confused many family members but; my dad isn't dead. Not only is he not dead, he's living his life again.

Addiction is an evil hole that many fall into. But everyone is presented with the option to help get them out or let them sink. I picked the first option and never doubted it since. My dad went through a horrible work-related accident, became addicted to pain pills, and changed his life around for the better; because of me. Now going back to the likelihood that someone you know is struggling with addiction, are you going to help them out or be a bystander? The choice is yours. 🙏

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Brooke Larsen is a high school senior from North Dakota. *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.