



All You Need is Love

By Bella Green

As children, we naturally idolize our parents—we long to make them proud, and we long to feel their love. Thus, how can we believe that our parents love us more than their drugs if they pick drugs as the priority given the option every time? To be a child of a parent struggling with addiction is to almost guarantee a lack of self-worth, a constant state of confusion, and a consistent battle between demonstrating compassion versus demonstrating 'tough love'.

However, a child with an addicted parent is not a statistic, and with the right amount of positive influence, the uphill climb towards acceptance of self and potential, as well as the ability to create boundaries becomes much more attainable. If we want these children to succeed, we have to love them, we have to show them what they're capable of, and we have to push them to reach that potential.

I found out my mother was a heroin addict when I was five years old. We had been coloring together while watching *Uptown Girls*, laughing until we cried as we tried to impersonate a young Dakota Fanning. After a while, she left without a word, and I didn't find her for another hour. She was in my room, passed out on my bed.

I shook her body, unable to elicit a response.

Confused and slightly panicked, I decided to go to more desperate measures. Lifting her eyelids did nothing except create an even greater sense of concern, and turning on my *Rugrats* VHS tape at full volume did not cause even the slightest stir. As I looked at her, I could only come to one simple conclusion: my mother was dying on my bed. With a weak concept of death and an even weaker sense of independence, I did not know what to do with myself. Exhausted, I curled up on the couch and cried myself to sleep.

When I went to visit my grandparents the next morning, I told them the events of the evening prior. It was then that I was introduced to the world of addiction, and was made aware that my mother had been struggling with drugs since she was twelve. My mom was alive; she had simply overdosed.

A few years later, my grandparents decided that it was in my best interest to take me away from my mom, allowing her to see me only on weekends. Eventually, she stopped showing up, and stopped talking to me for nearly years at a time.

I am fortunate enough to have grandparents that have always pushed me to

do better than my best—it is because of them that I am who I am today. Still, being raised by them did not take away the yearning I had to develop a relationship with my mom. I was at her side in every instance that she needed me, giving her my money and sympathy, in hopes that it would shed light on the fact that I loved her more than any drug ever could, and that she would realize that was all she needed.

As I grew older, I learned the strength of my independence separate from my mother. I could love her with every ounce of my being, but I could not change who she was. With a strong support system, I realized I was capable of determining a future for myself that was not parallel to the childhood I grew up with. I worked hard in school, got involved in different extracurriculars, and got a job when I was 16. I am now on track to go to a university to study Veterinary Medicine—something I've had a passion for ever since I was little. Still, I would be nowhere without the people that have supported me and shown me the love I never received from my mother. I am thankful for my experiences, as it allows me to be a positive influence to those who do not believe they can overcome the adversity they face.

People often mistake circumstantial adversity for debilitation. However, adversity can be battled, and surrounding yourself with positive influence helps. I know now that the best way to deal with tough situations is through love. Loving yourself enough to do better for you, and loving others to remind them they matter. Loving so that you can be a light instead of a source of darkness—something that often kick starts the cycle of addiction to begin with. I believe that loving is what we are called to do, and through love, we can truly conquer all. ☹️

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Bella Green is a recent high school graduate from Oregon. *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.