



Don't be Afraid to Ask for Help

By Ashton Jandel

An encounter with drugs and alcohol that I have dealt with involved a family member. It all started when my Aunt was 12 years of age. It was a very troubling time for her and our family; this is the story of my aunt's addiction to drugs and alcohol.

The addiction for my aunt began to get worse over the years and she became more addicted to the drugs and alcohol. Later on in her life, she realized that it had gotten severely out of hand, and she felt as though her life had no meaning. She tried to commit suicide. Thankfully her older brother and her mom took her to go get professional help. She arrived on October 12, 1997, where she received the help she always needed but never realized. She received help for 28 days, and within those 28 days, she became a new woman.

At the age of 14, my aunt felt as though I was old enough to know about her addiction and she shared her addiction story with me. I felt surprised and could not believe what she was telling me. To know that

someone so close to me, had hurt their body so much and lied to so many people. She shared with me what the drugs and alcohol did to her mind. The hallucinations were very vivid to her! She would go to sleep at night and hear voices and think she saw images that were never there. Listening to her side of the story has made me realize how much drugs and alcohol can affect one's life. She made many bad decisions, and all were while she was using drugs and alcohol. I didn't judge her or hold anything against her for what she had done. The decisions she made were her own, and I am just glad that she is still here today. I believe that the past does not and should not define who you are as a person. The past is the past! Like the quote from *The Lion King*, "Oh yes, the past can hurt. But the way I see it, you can either run from it or learn from it," and I believe my aunt learned a very valuable lesson.

Others can learn a lot from this experience that my aunt and her

family have gone through. Drugs and alcohol are no joke and can actually take over your life. Getting help should not make anyone feel shameful; everyone needs a little help from other people every once in a while. I believe that others should at least get one thing out of this and that is not to be afraid to ask for help. Asking for help does not mean your weak, it just means you are wise.

In my opinion what she did to get help was the best decision she ever made. I am so glad that she listened to her mother and older brother. If she would not have listened to her mother and older brother, today I might not have had my aunt or her family in my life. I think it was a huge mistake on her part but, because of what she did, my whole family now can see what drugs and alcohol can do to a person. My whole family has learned a lot from my aunt's experience. It definitely makes me think twice about peer pressure and "just doing it because everyone else is doing it." My aunt shares her addiction story with many people who are or are thinking about drinking or doing drugs.

I am beyond proud that my aunt took responsibility and got help. She is faithfully going to her AA meetings, where a group of people get together and tell their stories about their addictions. For one of her AA meetings, I was lucky enough to be invited to come with and listen to the others tell their addiction stories.

In conclusion, drugs and alcohol can affect anyone, no matter their age. Do not be afraid to ask for help, and stay strong. 🙌

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Ashton Jandel is a high school senior from South 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.