



Willpower

By Apostoli Kosaris

Drug abuse is a sensitive and all too common topic in today's society. To many, drugs are used as an opportunity to escape reality and deal with problems, whether it may be psychological or emotional. The source of a drug addiction can stem from various reasons including peer pressure, a broken home, stress, anxiety, or even curiosity. There are no boundaries to the cause of drug addiction. Unfortunately, I am witnessing the long term effects drugs can have on a person's mental and physical state with my uncle, Spyros, who is my mother's first cousin. He has always been in and out of our family's life and it wasn't until I was a teenager that I really understood his situation. He became addicted to drugs at fourteen years of age. He is now fifty years old and his struggles continue.

My uncle Spyros grew up in the Portland metro area, after his father and Mother split up when he was just five years old. He lived with his mom and lost that close connection with his father. His Father moved on, remarried, had three more children, and Spyros instantly became an outsider. For years, he tried to please his father but was constantly disappointed at

the weak and few attempts his father made to keep him close. At fourteen he began using alcohol and drugs as a way to escape his pain. It was not hard to find drugs as he was growing up in a neighborhood where drugs were easily accessible. He was quickly involved in heavy drugs, including methamphetamines and dropped out of High School. There was no turning back. My grandfather, Isidoros, has tried several times to help him out. He has been to rehabilitation on multiple occasions only to revert back to his ways. Spyros has a history of run-ins with the law, and has served numerous times in jail as his need for drugs and the inability to get money drives him to make bad decisions.

Now, at fifty years old, Spyros is incapable of working, unable to keep a home, and has an inability to follow through on jobs and promises. Health-wise he has suffered three heart attacks, an aneurysm, has stents, battles high blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, migraines, back pain, and the list is endless. Mentally, he is frail, unstable and has attempted suicide seven times. My family continues to feed him, provide him with various odd jobs around our homes, and frequently gives him

money to pay for necessities. My parents get frustrated but their compassion gets the best of them.

When I was younger I didn't know what to think of him, I wasn't aware of his drug problem and found him funny and somewhat interesting. Now, knowing his past, it's really hard for me to see him live his life based on decisions made long ago. I have come to realize that he has a kind heart with good intentions. However, his drug addiction has controlled him. His inability to function in society has been diminished. It is difficult to see such a good-hearted person have such a struggle in life. I wish I could help him, as do all my family members. It took years to accept that only Spyro can help himself. Until now, he hasn't been able to find the willpower or strength to overcome his addiction. He is damaged in many ways, but his heart remains warm. We all believe he is a wonder.

I have learned some important life lessons from my uncle, although he doesn't know it. I have learned the importance of making the right decisions in life, and what an impact a wrong decision can lead to when it comes to drugs. Spyro is an example of that one wrong decision when he was only fourteen years old. His situation not only saddens me but frightens me as well. I'm realizing as I'm getting older that life is full of forks in the road and I can only hope to always be strong and choose the right path for a successful, healthy and happy life. I've also learned how important it is to find healthy outlets to alleviate stress and anxiety. I feel empathetic to all those people struggling with drug abuse. Its effects impact individuals mentally, physically, and emotionally and to break the habit requires a will to overcome like nothing else. 🙏

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Apostoli Kosaris is a recent high school graduate from Washington. *Alert Magazine* congratulates him for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage him in the pursuit of his academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.