**Drug Addiction – I Never Thought It Would Happen To Me**

**Why Do Some People Suffer From Drug Addiction And Others Don't?**

I don’t know why I struggle with drug addiction; I could spend the rest of my life trying to figure it out, but I don’t think I will ever have an answer. Sure, it’s a combination of genetics and the environment, but that’s about as far as I can go with that. What matters more is that I find a way to stay healthy and stay on this journey, which includes taking a closer look at why I drank and used drugs the way I did.

I don’t have a clear memory of the first time I had a drink, but it was around age 12. In the beginning, it wasn’t an everyday thing for me; I would drink on the weekends or drink on vacation. I didn’t go out of my way to drink, and I didn’t drink alone, but I was always waiting and looking forward to the next time I would be able to get drunk. I believe my addiction to alcohol and drugs was beginning even in the early stages. I drank because I liked how it made me feel, and I enjoyed being able to escape from my life.

**The Early Days**

I don’t want to go too far back, but I’d like to provide some context to my life. My parents got divorced when I was 8, and I honestly don’t remember them ever being together. My mom quickly remarried, and to say that she and my step-dad (Dan) fought a lot would be quite the understatement. Most of my memories of them are of scary, toxic arguing while I cried in my room. Despite their fighting, I was very close to him and looked at him as another father. We played outside together, went swimming, played sports, watched TV – we did a lot together.

I remember being nine or ten years old, sitting in my bedroom, listening to Dan and my mom fight. My mom had bought Dan a new car- a car that cost almost $100,000 – and he wouldn’t let her drive it. I don’t know how he had the audacity to make this decision, but he did. He went to a bar one night, and on the way home, he let another woman drive it. When my mom confronted him about it, he acted like she was the crazy one. He acted like she was the one who did something wrong and that she was wrong for feeling the way she did. I was upstairs in my bedroom making perfume from this kit my mom had bought me. It came with all of these glass bottles and a bunch of different oils that you could mix together to create something that kind of smelled like perfume.

I could hear my mom and Dan screaming at each other. I don’t know if I knew then what they were screaming about or if I learned about it years later. All I know is that I felt so alone and so helpless. I wanted to be literally anywhere else. I have such a hard time remembering the sequence of events during this time of my childhood.



Maybe I called my dad and begged him to let me come to his house. Perhaps I ran downstairs crying and tried to get them to stop fighting. Most likely, I sat in my room alone and cried and cried until I fell asleep to the sound of their screaming. In the middle of one of their fights, I went downstairs to see what was going on.

When I walked into Dan’s office, he and my mom were in there, screaming at each other. He had both of her wrists in his hands, like they were physically fighting. I don’t remember how it ended or what happened after that.

The only thing worse than the screaming was the silence. Once Dan decided their fight was over, he stopped talking. He walked around the house as if he didn’t have a care in the world. My mom was still angry and sad beyond words, but he didn’t care. He would go into the living room and watch TV; he would laugh at the jokes that were on. He would go out with his friends, or he would go out with other women probably. But when he was at home, he would walk around not speaking to anyone, acting like he didn’t give a shit about anyone but himself.

When I think about my mom and Dan, one of the first things I usually think about is the argument they got into about Dan and me being too close. I must have been 10 or 11. I was sitting on Dan’s lap, facing him while he rubbed my back. He was on a chair in our living room, and my mom was on the sofa or somewhere in the same room. I don’t know how it came up or why she would ever say it in front of me, but she commented on him being too close to me. She said I was too old to be sitting on his lap like that and that he should know better. I didn’t even really get what she was saying; I just felt uncomfortable and wanted to get up and leave.

He got pissed, obviously, and screamed at her. I don’t really know what happened after that. Maybe he was too close to me; I have no idea. I was too little to know, and it’s hard to look back on it and make any sort of judgment because there’s so much I can’t really remember. We would lie in bed together and watch TV. He would have his arm around me, and we would sit there, laughing, watching, and eating chips. When I fell asleep, he would rub my back under my shirt, which I guess is part of what my mom got pissed about. I would sit on his lap, and yes, we spent a lot of time together, though I’m not sure any of it was all that inappropriate.

This was just one more thing for Dan and my mom to fight about. It was also one more thing for me to feel guilty about. I wanted to spend time with Dan, but not only was he cheating on my mom and yelling at her all the time, now she was mad about how he interacted with me. Somehow I felt like that was my fault. They fought about my brother and me a lot anyway. He treated me like I was his own child, but he didn’t like the way my mom had raised us. He didn’t like that we didn’t have to do chores and that my mom gave us anything we wanted.

He thought we were spoiled, which we probably were. He wasn’t our father, and my mom made it pretty clear that he didn’t have any say in how we were being raised. Too many years had passed for someone else to come into our lives and try to parent us like that. So this stuff about him being too close to me and touching me too much was just another source of contention between them that I thought was my fault.

**And Then Came The Swat Team**

I came home from school one day, and my dad (maybe my mom was there, I don’t remember) sat me down with my older brother to tell us that the SWAT team had shown up at my mom’s house. My mom and Dan had gotten into an argument, and my step-dad took my little brother (he probably wasn’t even a year old) into the bedroom and locked the door. He wouldn’t let her in, so my mom called the police. The police asked if Dan had any weapons in the house, and she told them that he does have guns in the home (legally and locked in a safe that no one else had access to). That triggered the SWAT team to show up at our house and broadcast it all over the local news channels.

My dad told me that Dan had left and wasn’t coming back. I cried for a while, and I don’t remember much else. I know I went to school the next day, and everyone knew what had happened. I was embarrassed and really sad. It seemed like everyone was staring at me and talking about it. Maybe they were, or maybe it was in my head. I don’t know. He came back at some point, but soon after that, he left for good. I don’t remember him even saying goodbye.

My mom pretty much fell apart when Dan left for good. He had been cheating on my mom with my mom’s employee, and he was now living with her. I would come home from school and my mom would be in her bedroom with all the blinds drawn, in bed, sleeping or crying. I don’t remember how long this went on, but it felt like forever. I didn’t have a bad childhood. I had parents who loved me and gave me everything I could ever want, materially. I also had parents who did their best to be there emotionally, and in a lot of ways, they did a good job. But there were a lot of times where I just felt utterly alone and desperate for some stability.

To say that I was not in a good place doesn’t even begin to scratch the surface. I isolated myself from my friends, quit soccer, and went to class less and less. I would drink while studying for finals and tests because I would be so wired from coke or Adderall that I felt like I needed alcohol to balance me out. I would continue drinking into the night and then take my sleeping pills and whatever other downers I had at the time. Somehow I still managed to do okay in my classes, but I was absolutely miserable. I hated myself for the way I treated Sam, but I didn’t know how to behave in any other way. I knew that he deserved better, and I didn’t understand why he would stay with someone like me. I never thought I was good enough for anyone, and this relationship just reaffirmed that for me.

rae letter

When my parents split up, they decided that my older brother and I (my little brother is from my mom’s second marriage) would switch between their houses every day. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, I would be with one parent and the other days with the other parent. Then it would switch, so the other parent got 4 days instead of 3. It was exhausting.

I never had any of my stuff because I was always leaving it at the other house. Fortunately, they lived a couple of blocks away from each other for my entire childhood, so it wasn’t *that* big of a deal. It was just disorienting, I guess.

When I was 12 or 13, I started drinking. I would hang out with my friends, and we would drink. I wasn’t drinking alone, but I probably always drank too much. Nothing terrible happened in the first few years of my drinking, but it definitely wasn’t healthy.

When I was about 13 or 14 years old, I met a guy who was at least 21 and started hooking up with him so he would buy alcohol for me. I honestly don’t even remember how I met him, but I didn’t and don’t know anything about him, really. I don’t even know his last name. He knew how old I was and didn’t care. We met in the parking lot of a 711 one night, and he wanted to have sex before he would get me alcohol. We went inside so he could buy condoms. After that, we got back into the car and drove to a park up the street.

I didn’t want to have sex with him, but I wanted alcohol, and I also didn’t know how to say no. I pushed him away from me a few times, but each time I did that, he put his hand around my throat, and I was too scared to do anything else. At the time, that encounter didn’t particularly bother me, at least no more than any other encounters we had. I didn’t like him, and I thought he was kind of creepy because he was so old and still willing to hang out with me, but I wasn’t afraid of him. I knew what he wanted and hung out with him anyway. If I knew a 14-year-old who told me this story today, I would be quite concerned. But to me, this was pretty normal, and I didn’t really think twice about it.

Even when my life wasn’t unmanageable due to drinking, I was often putting myself in risky or outright dangerous situations because of drinking. In my eyes, nothing too terrible had happened; it’s just an example of how I lived my life. These types of stories are endless. Drinking and doing other drugs led me to hang out with people I would never have met otherwise, and they were almost always older and male.

We used to go on vacation a lot with my mom – she would take us on cruises because she hated to fly. At 13 or 14, she would let me (and my older brother) drink as much as we wanted. If you were of legal drinking age on a cruise ship, you would get a card with a hole punched into it. My mom would give us her card so we could buy whatever we wanted. I remember spending a lot of time with the 25-year-old bartender from one of the ship’s bars.



One night, I met the bartender after he finished working. He brought a bunch of beer from the bar, and we spent all night hanging out and drinking. I went back to his room, which was down some scary dark hallways into the crew quarters. Again, nothing “bad” happened, other than the obviously problematic age difference. But there I was, 14 years old, in some stranger’s room with a bunch of other strangers right next door. I had no idea where I was. I was so drunk I hardly remember most of it. This was just a typical night/weekend/vacation/experience for me.

I don’t mention this to vilify my mom or point out what she did wrong. I just want you to understand how my life was. In my heart of hearts, I believe that she did her best and did what she thought was right. She thought we were better off drinking around her and being open about it than sneaking around. Ultimately, I drank in front of her and also snuck around, so I don’t think that plan worked quite the way she hoped. I continued to drink on the weekends without suffering any severe consequences for quite some time. Sometimes I would do things or say things that I regretted while I was drunk, but nothing that bad ever happened.

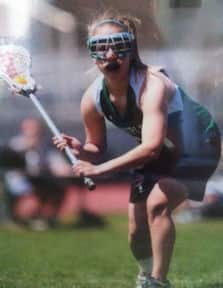
**And So My Drug Addiction & Alcholism Began**

It wasn’t until I was in high school that alcohol and drugs started to interfere with my daily activities. I began experimenting with different types of drugs. I tried benzos and Adderall and started to use those fairly regularly in 9th/10th grade. At first, I just got those drugs here and there from friends who were prescribed that medication. When I realized how much I liked those drugs, I had to find other ways to get them. If you ask enough people, eventually you find someone who has what you want. So that’s what I did.

I would take Adderall a couple of times a week, and from the first time I tried it, I knew I loved it. After a little while, I started to crush it up and snort it because I felt the effects faster that way. I also continued to drink on the weekends. Usually, I needed something to help me sleep, so I used Ativan/Klonopin for that. I would pretty much always mix Adderall and alcohol, which I now know can be extremely dangerous. But at the time, I didn’t know anything about addiction or the dangers of mixing different drugs. Even if I did, I probably wouldn’t have cared.

The bottom line is that I just wasn’t happy. I didn’t like that my parents were divorced and that I had to go from one house to the other each day. I didn’t like that my mom and her new husband fought all the time. I also didn’t like it when he left. I felt abandoned and felt like I had to take care of my little brother and my mom because she was too depressed to do it herself. Being at home was scary and miserable. I dreaded going home from school at the end of each day. I liked going to my dad’s house, but I always felt so guilty leaving my mom alone.

I always had many friends because I played sports, but I wasn’t comfortable with who I was. Even around my friends, I always felt like I didn’t fit in. So I didn’t feel comfortable at home, but I also didn’t feel comfortable around my friends. I didn’t feel comfortable in crowds or around strangers. I just wasn’t comfortable in my own skin. My solution was to drink and use drugs – this was the only way I knew how to deal with any pain or discomfort that I was feeling.



Playing sports was the most important thing in my life for a very long time, but no matter how much I cared or how important the next day’s game was, I drank or got high anyway. I would drink and get high the night before an early game. I would go to the games hungover and be unable to play to my full potential. We had an away game one day that was pretty far away.

 My friend was also on the team, and she wanted to smoke weed before we got on the bus to go to the game. I don’t even know why I did it – I didn’t even really like smoking.

We had about 5 minutes before we had to be on the bus, so we ran off and found somewhere to smoke quickly and then got on the bus and went to the game.

As far as I know, the coach didn’t know and never found out, and the game went okay. I just felt so empty, and was always doing something to try to get rid of that feeling. Part of me cared too much about everything, but the other part didn’t care what happened to me. So I did drugs and put myself in dangerous and stupid situations just to feel something.

Around this time, I started to realize that succeeding athletically just wasn’t enough for me anymore. From the time I could run around and play sports, I did. It was something that I was just naturally good at. Like really good at. As much as I loved playing, it didn’t make me happy the way it used to. The second I finished playing, I felt empty and full of despair. I was happy while I was playing, but I felt so much worse once I was done. It’s like that feeling of being in a crowded room and feeling such loneliness that it’s hard to breathe. I needed something more. That ‘something more’ ending up being alcohol and drugs.

When I was in 9th grade, my dad decided to take my brother to Florida to look at colleges. I told him I would stay home and sleep at my mom’s house for the weekend. The second he told me he was going out of town, I told my friends, and we started organizing a party. We invited anyone who wanted to come and made sure there was plenty of alcohol around. People got drunk, smoked in the house, ran around outside, and made a mess of the house. My dad later told me that the neighbors were about to call the cops but decided to just talk to him when he got home instead.



When my dad got home, he knew immediately that I had thrown a party while he was away.

We cleaned up as best we could, but there were holes in the carpet from cigarette burns, beer bottles and cans in the trash can and around the yard that I had missed, and just other things in the house that were out of place. I guess I knew he was going to find out, I just didn’t care. He told me I was grounded for a month and that I wasn’t allowed to go out at all, including going to a prom after-party in a couple of weeks.

Instead of saying okay and missing out on my drinking and social life, I decided to stay at my mom’s more often. Whenever my dad said no to something, I would go to my mom and ask her instead. When she said yes, I would tell my dad that I would stay at my mom’s, and then I would go out and do what I wanted. So I went to my mom’s, went to prom, and went to the party afterwards. My dad thought my mom picked me up after prom and brought me home. I don’t think he knew until I told him years later.

When I was in 10th grade (15 years old), we had a school dance that my friends and I were going to. It must have been during Halloween because we were all dressed up as superheroes. We went to a friend’s house before the dance and drank a lot before we went. I honestly don’t even know why we did it. We could have just gotten drunk and hung out at our friend’s house. Within a few minutes of arriving at the dance, some of the teachers/administrators knew that we had been drinking and pulled us aside.



When it was my turn to speak with the administrators, I told them I hadn’t been drinking, even though I was visibly drunk. I started crying hysterically – the way that only drunk people cry – telling them I didn’t drink and that I did nothing wrong. Most of my friends ended up getting some type of suspension, but nothing happened to me. My mom was out of town, and I was afraid if I called my dad, I would get in trouble, so I called my old babysitter to pick me up from the dance.

For me, that was pretty much the end of it. To this day, I still don’t know why I didn’t get in trouble. 

Another night when I was in 10th grade, I was at a party at my friend’s house, and the police showed up. There were 5-10 police officers, all inside the house, sitting everyone down about to breathalyze us. As one of the police officers turned away, my friend and I walked up the stairs, out the front door, and took off. It was the middle of winter, and I think there was snow on the ground. I didn’t have shoes on, but we didn’t want to get in trouble, so we kept running.

Every time a car would pass, we dove into the bushes to hide from what we thought might be the police (but obviously wasn’t). We eventually made it to my dad’s house, totally wasted and shoeless. My dad wasn’t thrilled, to say the least, but I don’t remember getting grounded or anything.

I share these stories because it shows why I kept drinking and using drugs. I never got in trouble, and even when I did, I went to my mom, so I could do whatever I wanted. Somehow I always managed to scrape by without suffering any real consequences, which just made me drink and use more.

It was also around 9th or 10th grade that I started seeing the school counselor once a week. I don’t fully remember how this happened. My dad knew I was feeling depressed, and somehow he got it set up. I don’t know if I suggested it or how it came about, but it did. From the moment I met with her, I think she knew I had some issues with drugs and alcohol. She urged my dad to set up an appointment with a drug and alcohol counselor, but we never did. She often asked me if I was using drugs, and I would say no. I sometimes wonder why she didn’t push a little harder.

Why didn’t she call my dad again and tell him she thought I was using drugs and needed some serious help? Why didn’t she push me harder when I said no? I wasn’t exactly an open book, and I probably wouldn’t have responded well if she pushed too hard, so maybe that’s why.

During my junior or senior year of high school, I tried [cocaine](https://www.addicted-to-sobriety.com/symptoms-of-cocaine-use/) for the first time. It was the most amazing thing I had ever felt in my life. Everything in the world felt right when I used cocaine. I wasn’t depressed. I wasn’t anxious. I didn’t feel alone. I felt alive. I liked to drink, and I liked other drugs, but I didn’t love anything as much as cocaine. Cocaine was the answer to all of my problems. I’m much happier now that I’m not addicted to drugs, but I still don’t think there’s a better feeling in the world.

My senior year in high school was a challenging time for me, and the drugs helped me through it. I was so unhappy, and I felt like I had no one to talk to about it – not that I even knew how to talk about anything. All I knew how to do at this point was drink or get high. That solved everything.

**And Then Things Got Worse**

This part is tough to write, honestly. Years ago, when I first wrote my story for this website, I just glossed over it. I’ve spent the last 10 years trying to figure out how to talk about things that I’ve been through, and sometimes I still don’t know how. My goal is to be as open as possible because I know there are people out there who have experienced very similar things, and it can be helpful to know you aren’t alone. So here goes.



I went to The Shipley School, a very small private school in Bryn Mawr, PA. Everyone knows everything about everyone for the most part. When I was in 7th grade, I played basketball on the junior varsity high school team. Let’s call the coach John.

He was a nice guy, but a little creepy. He often flirted with the players, and there were always rumors that he was sleeping with some of them. To this day, I have no idea if any of that is true or not. He was my coach for a year or two at the most, and then he left to go coach at another school. More on him later.

In 9th grade, I had a different coach – we’ll call him Mike. A few of the girls on the team had a crush on Mike, myself included. Starting in 9th grade, when I was 14 or 15, we were very close. Mike was 25ish, I think; he was an adult. Mike would often call me after our games to talk about what happened and how it went. He came and watched my other games – soccer or lacrosse – and he’d call me after those games to chat about them as well. These calls went on for a couple of years, and that was it. I think it was when I was in 11th grade that we started going to other basketball games together. We would watch other schools play and scout the other teams we would be playing in the future. He’d pick me up from school and drive me there, then drop me back off afterward. Sometimes we would go out to eat after, but that was it.

I have such a clear memory of when he called me and asked me to come over to his apartment for the first time. I was at my friend’s house with a few other people, just hanging out. I went to take the phone call in the bathroom so I could talk to him privately. I didn’t know he would ask me to come over; I figured he just wanted to chat, like usual.

Anyway – he asked if I wanted to come over, and I said yes. I went into my friend’s bedroom and told them all I had to go. I don’t remember if I went home first or went straight to his apartment, but I ended up at his apartment at some point that night. He lived in the city, and I wasn’t familiar with the area. When I got there, I didn’t know where to park, so I called him to let him know I was there and to ask him where I should go. He came outside wearing our team basketball sweatpants and a sweatshirt. He had just taken a shower, and to this day, I can still vividly remember the smell of the body wash he used. There are some things that I have almost no memory of and can’t picture no matter how hard I try, but other things have stuck with me so clearly.

Anyway, he got in the driver’s side of my car, and we drove around until we found parking. We got out and walked back to his apartment. I was so nervous that I was physically shaking. I wanted to be there, but I also knew I shouldn’t be there and I was terrified. I was also totally sober, which was very rare for me.

We went into his little apartment – I can still remember exactly what it looked like – and he made something to eat in the microwave, I don’t remember what. I was so nervous that I couldn’t eat anything. After that, we were sitting on his couch watching TV and just awkwardly talking about basketball. He reached over and touched my leg and told me he wished I was older. I don’t remember what I said, but I don’t think I’ll ever forget that moment.

Again, I absolutely knew I shouldn’t be there, but there was also a part of me that was so excited. Here was this person who I deeply respected and cared for and had a massive crush on. He made me feel special and wanted. I liked having his approval, and I liked feeling like I was good enough to be with someone like him. It became pretty clear that I wasn’t special. I was just someone he could manipulate and overpower.



I had thought about this so many times but never really expected it to happen. And it was happening. We were lying down on the couch on our sides, and he was behind me with his arm under/around me. We watched basketball for a while and then watched Pretty Woman. I was in such shock and was so nervous that I couldn’t pay attention to anything. After a few hours, I had to go home, so he started to walk me out. Before we got out of his apartment, he kissed me. I kissed him back. And then I left. I couldn’t believe what happened. I immediately called one of my friends and told her, even though I promised him I would never tell anyone. He asked me over and over again to promise him I’d never tell anyone, so obviously, he knew he shouldn’t be doing what he was doing. I mean…of course, he knew.

I went over to his apartment a few days after that, and we slept together. He led me to the couch and started kissing me. I kissed him back and let him lay me down on the couch. I let him get on top of me. All I could do was lie there and try not to cry. I tried to tell myself that I was just getting what I wanted. I went to see him because I liked him and because I wanted to be with him. I let him keep kissing me, and I let him put his hands all over me. I just pretended that I wanted him. At some point, we stopped to go upstairs and get into bed. I knew once we got in bed, I couldn’t say no. 

I knew what he was expecting, so getting in bed with him would imply that I wanted it too. It wouldn’t be fair to do that and then tell him to stop. So I think we were kissing in the hallway, and all I could do was think about telling him to stop. I knew I needed to tell him I wanted to go home – I needed to say something before it was too late to say no. So I did. I pulled away from him and told him I needed to go home. He just started kissing me again, leading me back, so my back was pushed up against the wall. I told him again that I needed to go home, but he grabbed my shoulders and pushed me back into the wall. I don’t even think I tried to move. I wasn’t really sure what just happened.

I put my hands on his stomach to push him away from me, but he just kept leaning into me, pressing me up against the wall harder. And then he loosened his grip and stopped pushing me. He kept kissing me. Maybe I could have left if I had said it again, now that he had let go of me.

But I couldn’t say anything, I just froze. I couldn’t say or do anything, so I let him lead me into his bedroom. I let him bring me into his bed, and I let him take off my clothes. I told him again that I didn’t want to do this and that I needed to go home. He looked at me and just put his hands back on my shoulders so I couldn’t get up. I said please stop, and he didn’t. So I stopped trying to get up. I just lay in bed with him and let him do what he wanted. He reached into the drawer next to his bed to get a condom, so at this point, obviously he wasn’t forcing me down on the bed. I could have moved and tried to leave again, but I didn’t. I didn’t do anything. I let him reach into the drawer, take out a condom, and put it on. Why bother trying to leave and say no? I had already done that, and he didn’t care; it didn’t work.

Maybe I didn’t really try hard enough, and maybe it was my fault. That’s how I saw it for more than a decade, at least. And if I’m being honest, I still see it that way sometimes. I let him get on top of me, and I just wanted it to be over. He kept asking me if I liked it and if it felt good. It hurt, and it didn’t feel good. I think it was probably pretty obvious that it didn’t feel good, but he didn’t care. Finally, it was over. He got up and threw the condom out, and came back into bed. He asked if I liked it, and I don’t really remember what I said. I was just lying there, trying not to cry. He turned over and told me to rub his back. So I did.

Admitting that I actually stayed there and rubbed his back after what had just happened is embarrassing. It’s so pathetic. After a few minutes, he told me I should go. He didn’t want my parents to wonder where I was, so I left. I went out alone to find my car. He told me which way to go and gave me directions. God forbid he actually walk me there. It was dark and late, and I don’t know the city very well, which he knew. But he didn’t care, obviously. So I found my car and I went home. And I actually went back to see him again, more than once. Sometimes I just had sex with him willingly. Other times I would tell him to stop and try to get him to get off of me, but he wouldn’t. He never listened. I don’t know why I kept going back, and I don’t know why I sometimes had sex with him willingly, and other times I didn’t. So yeah, it was pretty much my fault. I let this happen. I kept showing up there.

Everything was mostly the same after that – we talked on the phone a lot, texted, went to basketball games, and hung out. Like everything, it was great until it wasn’t.

After a little while, I decided I didn’t want to see him anymore. All he ever talked about was sex and he started to get even creepier than he was in the beginning, so I told him I didn’t want to do this anymore. When I told him, we were in the middle of our season, so he was actively my coach at that point, which made things quite uncomfortable. I was one of the best players on the team at that point. I don’t say that to brag – I say that because it’s an integral part of what happened with Mike. Once I told him I didn’t want to hang out anymore, he stopped playing me, and it didn’t go unnoticed. Parents talked about it. They wanted to know why I wasn’t playing. My dad wanted to know why I wasn’t playing. I went from starting every single game since 7th grade to sitting on the bench, barely playing a minute.

My dad sent him an email asking what was going on, and my dad isn’t that kind of parent. If I wasn’t good enough to play, then that would’ve been fine. But there was something else going on here, and everyone else saw it too. He responded and told my dad that I wasn’t playing well so he was switching things up. This was an absolute lie. There wasn’t a single person he could’ve replaced me with that was even close to as talented as I was. It was devastating. I lived for sports. Even when I felt empty and felt like I needed more, sports still kept me somewhat sane and grounded, and he was stealing that from me. And I let him. It must have been around February of my senior year at this point. Some of my memories are so clear and distinct, while others completely run together, so sometimes the timeline is hard to keep track of.

But here I was – my senior year, the last time I’d ever play basketball, and he wouldn’t let me play. I knew it was my fault. I went to his apartment even though I knew I shouldn’t have. I didn’t try hard enough to get him off of me. I didn’t say no convincingly enough. I don’t know. Somehow it was my fault, so I suffered in silence. And that was that. I spent the last part of my season on the bench.

Shortly after that, I started dating someone from my high school. I went a little while without talking to Mike, but he would always pop back up again. He would still text and ask me to come over. He would text and tell me to break up with the guy I was dating. Eventually, I had enough. I went to the school counselor and told her I needed to talk to her. I don’t even know why I did it, honestly. I think part of me liked the drama, if I’m being honest with myself. Part of me was also indescribably hurt and angry, and I just wanted someone else to know what happened.

I couldn’t get the full story out – I couldn’t tell her that he raped me because I don’t think I called it rape at the time. I told her that I slept with my coach and that I thought that someone should know. She listened, and at the end she said ‘you know I have to tell the head of school, right? Is that okay?’ and I said okay. I guess I knew that she would have to do that. I can’t remember if we told him together or if she told him first, and then I had to speak with him. By the time I told her, and she told him, I was 18. The only thing I remember from my meeting with the head of the school was that he said he wouldn’t inform my parents. He said that because I was 18, it was up to me if I wanted to tell them or not, and he would respect my privacy.

When I look back on that moment, I think it angers me more than anything that Mike did. Here is this adult, who is literally in charge of the entire school and all of the students who attend that school, and he thinks it’s acceptable not to tell my parents that my coach, a grown man, befriended me at age 14 and then slept with me when I was 17. Not only did he not tell my parents, but he didn’t fire the coach. He let him resign. Quietly. There had been rumors for a while that I was sleeping with him, so when we all showed up to school one day and he was just gone, people started talking. The guy I was dating was hearing stuff from his friends. They called me a slut, said I got their favorite teacher fired.



All of the teachers knew what was going on. A few of them pulled me aside to ask if I was okay, but none of them did anything. And I don’t know exactly what they should have done, but whatever the right thing to do was, they didn’t do it.

They didn’t discipline kids for bullying me or calling me a slut and saying it was my fault that Mike lost his job. They didn’t check in with me other than that first time to ask if I was okay. They didn’t make sure my parents knew what was going on. Obviously, I was not okay, and they just let it slide. In my eyes, they failed miserably. I don’t know exactly what they should have done, what would have been enough. What I do know is that it wasn’t my job to figure out what was enough – what they should do. It was theirs, and they didn’t do it.

Soon after that, my boyfriend broke up with me. He didn’t say that it was because of what happened, but it was clear that he didn’t want to deal with the whole situation, and I don’t really blame him for that.

The fact that I had to keep showing up to school and finish out the year was excruciating. I was embarrassed and ashamed. I thought everything that happened was my fault. People talked about me as I walked down the halls, and sometimes they didn’t even try to hide it. When I type it out, it sounds kind of silly – people were talking about me, so life sucked. But it was just everything.

The way the adults in my life handled this situation is almost more enraging than what Mike did, in some ways, and I wish I hadn’t just taken it. I wish I had told the whole world that the head of school let him resign instead of firing him. I wish I had told the entire world that the head of school knew about this and did nothing. Mike, by the way, is coaching division 1 women’s basketball, and it makes me so angry. One of the moments that destroyed my life propelled him into better career opportunities. It is enraging.

But that’s what happened – that’s what I let happen. This experience tainted everything about my experience at that school. It turned a pretty decent experience into something that is gut-wrenching just to think about. I was ashamed to get up in front of everyone and walk for graduation. Every time I had to step foot in that school and see the teachers and students who knew what happened, I was so ashamed. But my little brother still went to that school and would be there for a long time, so I went back many times, and it was devastating each time. I can’t come up with any other word besides devastating.

Eventually, my parents did find out. Someone anonymously emailed them to let them know that their daughter slept with the coach and got him fired. Very thoughtful of them! To this day, I have no idea who it was that emailed them. I don’t know if it was a student or a parent, but fuck them. That’s how I feel about whoever it was. My recollection is that my parents didn’t take it well. They asked how I could be so stupid. That’s all I remember about the conversation we had when they first found out.

Sometime after I graduated, my mom asked me to go to the school with her to talk to the head of school and basically blackmail him into letting my brother go to school there for free. My mom was struggling with money, and private school is insanely expensive. I don’t remember the exact words that were said, but the gist of it was that if he didn’t help my brother with finances, everyone would find out about what happened, and they would find out that he let the coach resign and work with female students somewhere else.

I believe that my mom’s intentions were good. She wanted my brother to stay at Shipley because he loved it there, but she didn’t have the money for it. I believe that she didn’t mean to hurt me or know that it would hurt me. And I know that she didn’t know everything that happened with Mike. I also realize that this interaction was very damaging to me. I wanted to help her and my brother, so I did it anyway. And that was that. My parents did eventually ask if I wanted to go to the police, but it seemed kind of pointless. I was 17 when we started sleeping together, which is above the age of consent in Pennsylvania. I don’t believe there were (or are?) any specific laws in Pennsylvania that make it illegal to sleep with a student. I know there are in other states, and there definitely should be, but at the time, I’m pretty sure there weren’t.

To say that I fell apart after all of this happened would be an understatement. In my mind, nothing mattered anymore. It didn’t matter how much I drank, how much I used drugs. It didn’t matter who I slept with or how many people I slept with. I was just done caring about anything. I had just graduated from high school and was recruited to play lacrosse in college. Despite the fact that this was supposed to be my dream come true, it wasn’t.

**And Then They Got Even Worse**



I didn’t think things could get any worse, but they did. After I graduated, I was raped by a group of guys at a 4th of July party. I spent years blaming myself. I drank too much, so it was my fault. I was high, so it was my fault. I willingly slept with a stranger at that party, so it was my fault when his friends raped me. I remember a group of guys leading me into the basement of my friend’s house, saying we needed to go lie down and wait until the power came back on. There was a big storm, and they said the power went out. In my drunken state, this made sense, and I didn’t question it. I didn’t know these guys, but they were friends of my friend, so I also didn’t feel like I was putting myself in a dangerous situation.

Somehow, I ended up in a bed with 2 of the guys, one on each side. I tried to get up, but they held me down. As they did this, their friends came and raped me, one by one. I do distinctly remember that each of them used a condom – so very thoughtful of them.

I also so vividly remember thinking they were recording it. Someone was holding something that had a light on it, like a phone flash or something. I don’t know if they were recording or not, and I probably never will, but that’s what I thought at the time. After one of their friends got off of me, I tried to get up again, and for some reason, they let me.

I got up, ran upstairs, ran outside, and got in my car. I opened the car door and threw up. The fact that I drove off is frightening – I was beyond drunk and high. But somehow I made it to my friend’s house and slept there for the night. I told her I slept with a bunch of guys that night but didn’t tell her until many years later what really happened. I don’t remember being scared. I knew what was happening but was so drunk I couldn’t do more than say no and try to get up. It’s weird how the memories of what happened can be worse than what actually happened.

When I think about it today, I feel sad and pretty angry. But it was years before I could feel sad and angry. For more than a decade, I felt nothing but shame. I truly believed that it was my fault. I thought that I was overreacting for letting it affect me. And I still feel that sometimes – like I’m overreacting. I wasn’t scared at the moment. It happened, and then it ended, so what’s the big deal? When I get into that state of mind, I try to think about what I’d say to someone if they shared that same story with me. I would tell them that I’m sorry. I would tell them that what happened was horrible, and of course, they aren’t overreacting. I would tell them it wasn’t their fault, no matter how drunk they were, and I would mean it.

I guess you could say that this was the last straw.

After that party, I didn’t care about anything. I wasn’t suicidal, but I didn’t care if I lived or died. I drank, I got high, I slept around. I didn’t work out or train like I was supposed to, and I didn’t care.

For so many years, drugs and alcohol numbed most of the pain that I felt, and the only thing I cared about that summer was having enough drugs/alcohol to get me through the day.



I started to think that I gave off some sort of vibe. Like I was carrying around a sign that said, “Do whatever you want to me because ultimately I’ll end up blaming myself and thinking that I asked for it or deserved it. Nothing bad will happen to you because I’ll never tell.”

**In The Midst of My Addiction To Alcohol and Drugs**

When I got to college in the fall, I decided to try out for the soccer team as well and made the team. Being away from home and away from all of the things I thought were making me unhappy was supposed to make my life better. I thought playing soccer and meeting new people would make me happier. What I soon realized was that it didn’t matter where I was. The unhappiness , anger, and pain I was feeling were inside of me. No matter where I went or what I did, those feelings followed me. And it was utterly overwhelming. I felt like I couldn’t breathe anymore.

A few weeks after I got to college, I received an email from Mike. I can’t remember much of what he said, and I didn’t save the email. He apologized for ‘how everything happened,’ which is worse than no apology, really. We continued to talk and email back and forth for a while, and he eventually asked if I would visit him. He had moved to another state and was coaching basketball there. For the life of me, I cannot tell you what I was thinking, but I agreed to see him.

There was a part of me that still really cared about him and liked him. I don’t want to say I loved him, but despite everything that happened and everything he did, I still wanted to see him. Around Halloween of my first year in school, I drove a few hours to see him. I spent the night, and while we slept, someone broke the window of my car door and stole some stuff from the car. I woke up, and Mike was on his way to take it to get it fixed.

When he came back, I told him I was ready to leave. He was upset that I didn’t want to sleep with him and said that I should have sex with him because he paid to get my window fixed. So I did. I was scared not to. I just wanted to get out of there as quickly as possible, and that seemed like the easiest way to do it.



When I got back, we talked a little bit, but it mostly faded out. He would pop back up here and there over the next year or so, but eventually, we just stopped talking for good. I still liked him, and there was always something inside of me, wondering if we could ever be together for real. When I think about it now, it seems crazy that I would even think that, but I was in a pretty weird/bad/scary place at that time, and it made sense to me.

During the spring semester, I got in trouble at school due to drinking and using. I was suspended from my lacrosse team for about a week, had to do community service, was required to attend an alcohol education class, attend therapy once a week, and was put on disciplinary probation. 

Even after I got in trouble with the school, my drinking and drug use continued and worsened.

I remember waking up one morning with a broken nose and another morning with a few broken fingers/knuckles.

On both occasions, I didn’t know what had happened. Many nights I didn’t know how I got home the night before or who I was out with. I was still able to do okay in school and incredibly well on the lacrosse team. Not drinking or slowing down my drinking and drug use didn’t even cross my mind as an option.

**Home For The Summer**

When I got home from college for the summer, I met Sam. I was 19, and he was 28 (though he told me he was 25). We started dating, and things were pretty serious between us from the very beginning. For the first 2 or 3 weeks that we were together, I drank less. We would go out and not drink. We would take my little brother out to the movies and spend time with my family.

However, within just a few weeks, I began to drink even more than I had during the past year. I would drink all night, every night. During the day, I would sleep, get high, and wait for Sam to get home from work and then do it all over again. We were together all summer, and the drinking and the drug use only progressed. My moods changed drastically when I was under the influence, and yelling and throwing things became a normal part of my nights. I would wake up in the morning to broken glass on the floor or a dent or hole in the wall, and no recollection of what happened.

When I went back to college in the fall, things started to really fall apart. I quickly found that I was absolutely incapable of being honest with Sam and incapable of being faithful. I lied, and I cheated. Over and over again. After dating for just a few months, he revealed that he was about to be deported. I loved him and didn’t want that to happen, so I suggested we get married. We didn’t have a ceremony or anything. We just hired someone to marry us, and did it alone.

My mom knew and supported my decision. I didn’t tell my dad because I knew he would not be happy. I didn’t tell him for a couple of years, I think.  I knew I didn’t want Sam to leave, but I was definitely not ready to be married, and it only made things worse for me. The drugs and alcohol just completely took over after that.

I was at school one night, waiting for Sam to arrive. He was coming from work in Philadelphia, so he was about an hour and 15 minutes away. He was coming to visit because I had a lacrosse formal/dance – basically just an open bar where everyone danced and got wasted. I started drinking early, so I was drunk before Sam even got there. We all had to take a bus to the place because it was off-campus, and if we didn’t get on the bus, we couldn’t go to the party.

I had told Sam about this weeks in advance and really wanted him to come with me. Somehow, he ended up locking himself out of his room and had to wait for someone to get master keys before he could come. I was pissed and told him he better hurry up, or I would leave without him. He ended up making it right as the bus was about to leave. I think I was actually in line getting on the bus when he showed up – I definitely wasn’t going to wait for him.

When we got to the party, Sam had to get drinks for me because I wasn’t 21 and didn’t have a wrist band for the open bar. We were dancing and hanging out, and he went to get us some more drinks. When he came back, he saw me dancing with and kissing another guy. I have absolutely no idea who this guy was, and I barely remember this happening. I have flashes here and there, but that’s about it. When he returned, he dropped both drinks on the ground and broke the glasses they were in.

He stormed off and started walking up the dark street, saying he was leaving. He had no idea where he was going, and we were way too far away to walk back to campus. This was before Uber or Lyft existed, so he didn’t have any other option except to wait outside for the party to end and go back to campus on the bus. I think it was a winter formal or something because I remember it being really cold outside.

I don’t remember anything else about the dance, but we did get back on the bus together, and he would barely speak to me. I begged and cried and told him I was sorry. I was so drunk that I’m not sure I even knew what I was apologizing for. Anyway, somehow I got him to agree to spend the night so we could talk in the morning.

He woke up early to a phone call that he had to rush back home to get to work, so he left. He asked if I would come with him to talk, but I told him I was too sick and needed to sleep more and fell back asleep. So there I was – I just cheated on my boyfriend in front of him (if I remember correctly when this dance was, he was actually my husband at that point), begged him to stay with me so we could talk, but then refused to go home with him when he asked.

A few hours later, I woke up feeling much less hungover, so I tried to call and text him but got no answer. I got in the car and drove to his place as quickly as I could. I don’t remember the contents of our conversation, but we were fighting about what happened. Everything that happened when I was deep into my addiction is so blurry, but at some point, we were in bed talking, and I was holding a pretty dull serrated knife to my throat, telling him I was going to kill myself if he left or wouldn’t speak to me. I didn’t want to kill myself, and I had no intention of killing myself. I just wanted him to forgive me, and I wanted to move on and have things go back to normal (because normal was so good…).

The knife I had was barely sharper than a butter knife. Honestly, I’m not sure I could have caused much damage even if I had wanted to. I was lying down, and he was sitting on the bed, and I just kept telling him over and over again that I’d kill myself and kept holding the knife to my throat. That’s all I remember about that. Things going back to normal was what I wanted, but normal was horrible. Normal was getting plastered every night, cheating on him, screaming at each other, throwing things, punching walls. It was a disaster. But back to normal we went.

I remember another time that I was home visiting him. Sam and I were fighting about something. He was angry and upset with me, and I have to imagine it was because I had gotten drunk and cheated on him. I don’t remember which time this was, but I remember that this happened one time during an argument about my cheating. I didn’t know how many other ways I could say sorry, and all I wanted was for him to forgive me and to move on.



So I BEGGED him to hit me. I wanted him to do something, anything, so that I would feel better about how I had treated him. I egged him on. I pushed him, I screamed at him, I threw stuff across the room. I screamed and yelled and cried, telling him just to hit me if he hated me so much. I dared him to do it. And then he finally very lightly smacked me across the face. It’s never okay to hit someone, but to call it a hit is honestly an overstatement/exaggeration. He immediately started crying and ran to the bathroom and threw up. I then acted completely devastated. I was indignant.

How DARE he ever lay his hands on me. How could he do such a thing!? He was now crying and apologizing, saying he couldn’t believe what he had just done. And that was precisely the point. Now I had shifted the argument. Instead of arguing about how horrible of a person I was because I had cheated on him for the millionth time, we were arguing and crying because he ‘hit’ me. Now things could go back to normal!

To say that I was not in a good place doesn’t even begin to scratch the surface. I isolated myself from my friends, quit soccer, and went to class less and less. I would drink while studying for finals and tests because I would be so wired from coke or Adderall that I felt like I needed alcohol to balance me out. I would continue drinking into the night and then take my sleeping pills and whatever other downers I had at the time.

Somehow I still managed to do okay in my classes, but I was absolutely miserable. I hated myself for the way I treated Sam, but I didn’t know how to behave in any other way. I knew that he deserved better, and I didn’t understand why he would stay with someone like me. I never thought I was good enough for anyone, and this relationship just reaffirmed that for me.

**Living With A Drug Addict**

During winter break of my second year in college, I decided to transfer to a school close to home and move in with Sam. I never imagined that things could get worse between us and in my life in general, but they did. I didn’t know anyone at the new school, and I felt totally alone. I had left my friends behind and everything that I had gotten used to. I left behind soccer and lacrosse, and everything that I had worked my whole life to achieve. I started to resent Sam because I felt like it was his fault I was at a new school that I hated. I was mean and angry, and drinking and drugs only made that worse.

I would wake up every morning, wishing I didn’t have to wake up anymore. I used to have dreams that I was somewhere else, either back at my old school or somewhere else, and then I would wake up and remember where I was. I would realize that I had to get out of bed and make it through the day. I just couldn’t believe I had to get out of bed again. I didn’t want to die, but I didn’t know how I could keep living like that.

I signed up for lacrosse at the new school but quit after a month or so. All of this just made me feel more alone and more like a failure. Playing sports was the one thing in my life that I was great at. It was what people knew me for, and it was where I got pretty much all of my self-esteem from. I threw that away because drinking and getting high became more important.

Living with Sam definitely didn’t solve any of our problems. I continued to lie to him nonstop, and I continued to cheat. It came to a point where I stopped lying; I didn’t care enough to lie. I just told him I was going to do what I wanted and that he was more than welcome to wait for me and stick around if he wanted to.

It wasn’t unusual for me to go out and not come back until sometime the next morning without letting him know that I was okay or that I would be coming back. It wasn’t unusual for me to go out with another guy and call Sam later in the night because I was too drunk to find my car and I couldn’t get home. I came home from some guy’s house one morning at 6am, still wasted, without shoes or a bra because I couldn’t find them.

 I loved Sam, or I thought I did, but I didn’t know how to be in a healthy relationship. I loved spending time with him, but I loved using and drinking more. We had some good times together, but most nights were filled with screaming and crying – mostly on my end. He knew I drank because we drank together, but he didn’t realize I was using anything else.

Drinking and driving was also a very regular occurrence for me. I was driving drunk regularly, even before I got my driver’s license. My mom bought me a car when I turned 16 before I got my license, and I would regularly take the car out alone and drive it after I had been drinking. No matter how much I had to drink or what other drugs I was on, I would drive if I needed or wanted to get somewhere. Some mornings I would wake up and not know if I had driven home or gotten a ride home. Sometimes I would get a ride home and have to go back out the next morning to find where I had left my car.

I remember one night, I was driving home absolutely wasted, and decided I wanted to see if I could go 100mph. By some miracle, I never got pulled over and got a DUI, and I never got into an accident and killed or injured anyone or myself. Emotionally I was a mess. I just couldn’t imagine getting up the next morning to repeat the same thing over again. Physically, I had lost 25/30 pounds from using drugs, drinking, and not caring about eating or staying healthy.

After I quit the lacrosse team at the school I transferred to, I got a job at a local gym to fill some of my time. I met some new people, and I began to experiment with opiates (heroin and oxycontin) on top of drinking and the other drugs that I was using. I only used heroin on the weekends and Oxy sometimes during the week. I wasn’t using either of these every day, so I thought it was fine. I had a picture in my head of what an addict was, and a young middle-class girl at a private college didn’t conform to that image.

On a night when Sam had to work, I went out with Phil, a guy I met at the gym. Once Sam left for work, I had a few drinks, did a little coke, and put some vodka in a bottle to bring with me on the train. Phil and I were going to take the train into the city. He was going to get on the train in Ardmore, and I was going to drive to the Overbrook train station and meet him on the train. I was drunk by the time I got to the train station. I had on black spandex, flip flops, and a blue shirt. I had my hair down because he always told me he liked it that way. I didn’t really give a shit what he liked. I just wanted to go out, drink, and get drugs from him, which at that point I knew he had or could get.



The restaurant we went to was about a block away from where Sam works. I don’t know if I wanted to get caught or what, but it was pretty stupid to go that close to where he was. He never saw us, but it would have been so easy and not that strange for him to step outside and see us walking around. Writing about this makes me feel sick. Seriously.

No matter how drunk I was or how badly I needed drugs, it’s hard to reconcile who I was at that time with who I am today. That night, I didn’t feel an ounce of remorse or guilt.

The only thing I cared about was getting drugs and not getting caught. All I cared about was having a good time and getting what I needed. After we finished dinner, we went to a bar right next to the hotel Sam works at. We sat on a couch, waiting for our drinks, and started kissing.

He had his hands all over me before we even got back to his place. The memories I have of this night are in fragments. There are some parts of the night that are just totally blank, and other parts that I can remember as if it happened yesterday. I remember that I paid for the entire dinner and all of our drinks with Sam’s credit card.

At some point, we left and took the train back to Overbrook because that’s where my car was. We got in my car, and I told him I wanted to come back to his place, so that’s what we did. Sam called me, and I told him I was on City Ave and I would be home soon. Before I hung up the phone, he heard Phil’s voice. Sam wanted to know who the guy was. I told him to leave me alone and hung upon him. He called me probably 20 times. I finally picked up and told him I’d be home when I felt like it, turned off my phone, and went to Phil’s apartment.

I don’t remember the drive back to his place, but somehow we ended up there. We had another drink and started kissing again. I asked him if he had anything he could sell me, and he said he did. He didn’t have coke, but he had heroin, so that would have to do. I asked him if he could get it. He started kissing me again and told me he would get it later. I asked one more time, and he once again said later. It was pretty obvious that if I wanted anything, I was probably going to need to sleep with him. I may have been able to get him to sell me some, but it was easier this way. After we had sex, he left the room. I don’t know how long he took, but when he came back, he had the heroin and some needles. He also had a spoon and a lighter. I had taken painkillers before, but cocaine was really what I wanted. I had never done heroin, and I had never injected anything before.

When I told him I had never done it before, he said it was fine, that he would do it for me. So he did. I watched him put some of the heroin on the spoon and drip some water in it. He flicked on the lighter and put it under the spoon, keeping it there until it bubbled. He put a cotton ball in the spoon and pulled heroin up into two syringes. He said he would do mine first. I don’t remember if I was nervous or not. I think I was too drunk to really think anything at all. He wrapped something around my arm and grabbed the syringe. It didn’t take him long to find a good vein, and he put the needle into it. Once he drew back and saw the flash of blood, he plunged the liquid into my body, and at that moment, I thought I had found the greatest thing in the entire world. I thought I had found the solution to all of my problems. Again. I used heroin with him off and on, but for whatever reason, I never really sought it out.

Another night, I went out with Phil again. Sam finished work early and came to the bar I was at with Phil. I don’t remember if I told Sam that I was there or how he knew, but he showed up. I told Sam to leave, and again, I’d be home when I felt like it. And he left. Our relationship was just a disaster at this point, and I was not a nice person in active addiction, to put it mildly.

I guess on some level, I knew that what I was doing was dangerous, but I didn’t care, and I didn’t know how to stop. I never stopped and wondered if I had a problem with drug addiction or alcoholism. I never really cared about the adverse effects of alcohol or the long term effects of alcohol and drug abuse. Sure, I cared that my relationships were suffering and that I was hurting people, but I cared more about drinking and getting high. At this point, I just gave up. It seemed like a lost cause to try to repair any of the problems in my life and relationships.

Around this time, I started talking to John, that coach I was telling you about earlier – the one who was creepy and always flirting with the underage girls on the team. He sent me a friend request on Facebook and then sent me a message. Somehow we started talking, and he told me that if I would meet him at a hotel and sleep with him, he could get me cocaine. He was married and had a baby, but I didn’t care. We met a few times at a hotel, and he stood by his promise. Eventually, Sam found out that I was talking to him.

I was sitting on the couch one night, waiting for John to send me a message. Sam was home too, but I don’t think he was sitting next to me. I got up to go to the bathroom, and before I could get back, I heard Sam scream my name. Fuck. I suddenly realized that I had left my Facebook messages open, and he read them. I tried to literally grab the computer out of his hands, and he just stared at me. I could tell from his face that he read enough to figure out what’s going on. He didn’t know the extent of my drug use, but it didn’t matter. All that mattered was that I was having a conversation with some guy about fucking him for drugs. If that wasn’t bad enough, there were details in there that he definitely did not want to see. I remember thinking that I could literally feel my heart beating, and I started to shake. I was so angry, but not at Sam. I was so angry that I was stupid enough to leave my computer up when I was having a conversation like that. I was just standing there, trying to figure out what to say.

He asked me what was going on, and for a moment, it seemed like maybe he didn’t read enough to really see what was happening. I tried my best to turn it around on him like I often did. I screamed at him for looking at my stuff, asking why he thought he had the right to go through my computer. He wasn’t buying into it this time. He said he was leaving, and I told him to go. I just wanted him to go away so I wouldn’t have to explain the conversation.

As he was about to walk out the door, I told him I didn’t want him to go and that I was just talking to the guy about getting drugs.



I know he didn’t believe me because he asked to see the conversation. So he didn’t read all of it, which was all I cared about.

I told him I deleted it, and he couldn’t see it, but that I was talking to him because I needed to get drugs from him. I think he ended up staying, and I’m sure he had an idea of what was going on, but we didn’t talk about it much more after that. I don’t think anything I did really surprised him at this point.

When you’re using drugs heavily, there often comes a point where you don’t have enough money to buy enough drugs. Some people steal stuff, but that’s not what I did. I stole some oxy from my dad once, but I never stole my family’s money or stuff and then sold it. What I did was sleep with guys who could get me what I needed. It didn’t really seem like a decision for me; it was just inevitable. I needed something, and I needed a lot of it. I had money to get a little, but I always wanted more, so I did what I had to do.

I don’t even remember how it came up with guys that I would sleep with them if they could get me drugs (or alcohol when I was younger). I remember when I first started talking to John, he offered me money if I would sleep with him. I don’t really know why. I guess he just wanted to sleep with a young girl because he was sick of his wife. I didn’t want money, though, and that’s what I told him. I’m really trying to remember how this even came up. It was either on AIM or over Facebook – we talked both ways.

He was my coach for a year or two when I was in 7and 8 grade, so it’s not like I knew him very well or had any kind of relationship with him prior to this. I guess somehow we ended up being friends on Facebook, and he thought he could sleep with me. I don’t know if there’s just something about me that draws in guys who want to treat me like shit. Or maybe I end up seeking them out, I’m not really sure.

The problem with any addictive/compulsive behavior is the progression. I started out drinking and getting high for fun. I ended up sticking needles in my arm, sleeping with guys to get drugs, driving drunk. I ended up miserable, hating myself, and hating everyone and everything around me. By the time I realized that I didn’t want to live like that, it felt like it was too late. I didn’t know that there was any other way to live. For years, I thought the only possibility was to drink and get high for the rest of my life.

When I pictured my life years down the line, I imagined I’d be drinking, getting high, and cheating on my husband, whether that would be Sam or someone else. I didn’t understand that there were people who didn’t drink that much. There were people who didn’t blackout every time they drank and didn’t start throwing things or hitting people. There were people who never did and never would cheat on their husbands.

The other problem was that as time went on, as I started using drugs and drinking more and more, the relief stopped coming. The relief and the nothingness that I felt stopped. So I did what anyone would do: I used different drugs. I used more often. I did whatever I had to do to try to get that back. In the process, I ended up hurting the people around me in so many ways it’s hard to comprehend sometimes. I ended up pushing my family away; I almost never saw them. When I did see them, they were always worried. Over the course of 6 months or so, I had lost more than 25 pounds. Every time I saw my mom, she asked me if I was anorexic. Every time she asked me this, I yelled at her and told her to leave me alone. Sometimes I told her I hated her.

What I really wanted to do was ask her if she was fucking blind. I’m not anorexic. I’m doing drugs. I wanted to stop, but I didn’t know how and didn’t know if I could do it. How could someone be so blind? I wasn’t at the point yet where I wanted to stop badly enough to talk to my mom and tell her what was going on. At this point, I wasn’t even aware that stopping was an option. I couldn’t even comprehend that drug addiction was really my problem. All I knew was that I hated everything, and something needed to change, but I didn’t know what. I didn’t really know I had an issue with drug addiction; I didn’t have the words for it at that time.

**"Sober"**

On May 29th, 2009, things finally came to a head. I remember the date because it was Sam’s birthday. Unfortunately, he had to work that day until kind of late, so we wouldn’t get to celebrate together until much later or the next day. I know it was a weekend, either a Friday or a Saturday. When he went to work, I started drinking. After having a few drinks, I drove myself to a bar about 20 minutes away from where we lived. I had been to this bar before and knew they wouldn’t card me, which was great since I still wasn’t 21. I got there and just sat at the bar by myself. I don’t know if the plan was to meet someone or if I just wanted to be out and be around other people – honestly, I don’t know what my intentions were. I was there for a long time, having drink after drink after drink.

rae cop car

I was supposed to pick up Sam from work, but that was not going to happen. I sent him a text to tell him I couldn’t make it to get him and asked if he could find a way home. I think he grabbed a taxi, but sometime later that night, he ended up meeting me at the bar. I was talking to some guy, though I couldn’t tell you anything about him. I couldn’t tell you his name, his age, what he looked like, literally nothing. I know I kissed him in front of Sam at some point, which obviously caused quite the fight.

We got into my car and drove a few blocks up the street and then parked and got out of the car.

The car was parked in the middle of the street, not safely in a spot. I don’t know if I drove or if Sam drove. We started screaming at each other, though I don’t remember specifics.

 I started running down the street and told him to leave me alone. I remember walking into someone’s yard and sitting in their bushes, trying to hide from him so he couldn’t find me.

He kept yelling my name, crying, and I refused to answer. Soon after that, the police showed up. They said someone called because we were making too much noise.

The police put both of us in the back of the police car (I think different ones) and brought us to the police station. I was in one room, and Sam was in the other. I have such a vivid memory of him screaming my name over and over again while we were sitting in there with the police officers. Luckily, though it was fairly obvious one of us had driven the car drunk and parked it where it was, we weren’t charged with a DUI.

They charged both of us with disorderly conduct and public drunkenness and called my mom. I was 19, but rather than charge us with anything more severe or take us to jail, they just wanted us out of there. It was around 2 or 3am. My mom and my little brother, who was about 10 at the time, showed up at the police station to pick us up. She drove us to my dad’s house to sleep for the night.

When we got to my dad’s house, I got into a huge fight with my mom. I told her I hated her and never wanted to speak to her again. I don’t remember what we were fighting about, I just know that I was drunk and pissed off and took it out on whoever was around. When we woke up the next morning, we needed my dad to take us to find the car. Neither of us knew exactly where it was, so we drove to the general area and started looking for it. We found it, but then I realized I didn’t have my cell phone.

We checked the car and then drove back to the bar to look for it, but they said they didn’t have it. I’m not sure how I didn’t realize this sooner or why Sam didn’t say so sooner, but I later learned that I had hit Sam in the head with my iPhone so hard that the screen shattered and cut the side of his head. I eventually found my broken phone under the seat of the car.

I’d love to say that getting arrested woke us both up enough to realize how big of a problem drinking had become in our lives, but this isn’t totally true. It woke my parents up, though, and they said that I had to get treatment. They were still supporting me in some ways – paying for my car and some other bills, I think. I was married, but my dad didn’t know that we were married, and I was only 19. Sam and my parents were still unaware of the other drugs I was using. I told them I would stop drinking, and I did – we both did – but it never even occurred to me to stop using everything else. I was starting to admit to myself that I had a drinking problem, but I still didn’t acknowledge that I had an addiction to alcohol AND drugs.

After we got arrested, my mom made us move in with her and live in the basement for a while. Sam and I both moved into her house for a little while, and I pretended to be clean. Sam and I got along better once I stopped drinking, but I was still talking to other guys and not really hiding it. One morning, I woke up, and Sam was gone. I asked my mom where he went, and she said he was leaving and going back to Turkey forever because he saw that I was talking to Phil still. My mom wouldn’t let me use my car, so I ran to the train station, took the train to the station nearest where I lived with Sam, and ran the rest of the way there. I saw him and I was so relieved. I loved him so much, and I didn’t want him to leave me. I really believed that, at least.

In that moment, I wanted to be a better person; I wanted to be happy, loyal, and a good wife. But those moments were so fleeting before I got clean and sober. We decided we would go back to my mom’s and tell her we were leaving. If she didn’t want to pay for my car or any of my bills anymore, that was fine, but we couldn’t keep staying at her house. We told her, and she ended up letting us take the car anyway. And then it was back to normal. I was living with Sam, pretending to be clean, talking to other guys, still absolutely miserable.

After we left my mom’s, I started attending an outpatient drug and alcohol program. For about 4 months, I went there pretending to be clean and sober. Sam and I spent the summer together “sober,” trying to rebuild our relationship. I wasn’t drinking, but I was still doing other drugs every day. I attended a couple of AA meetings. I also tried NA meetings, but I had no interest. I see now that the reason I wasn’t interested in the NA meetings is self-explanatory – I had no desire to be clean. I didn’t really even have a concept of what being clean and sober meant.

 The stories go on and on and on, but these are some good examples of the person I became in active addiction. I was a different person then, and I became a different person when I was high. When I’m high, I’m selfish and mean – like really mean. I can look at anyone when I’m high and tell them I don’t care about them, and mean it. Drugs are more important – that’s what I told Sam, and I really meant it in that moment. When I’m high, the rest of the world disappears. No matter how much I love you – I’ll love the drugs more. When I’m using, no one can hurt me. All I feel is the drugs, or I feel nothing at all. Until I’m not high anymore.

**Almost Ready for Recovery**

I continued to lie to Sam and everyone around me and kept using drugs. I would sneak out of our apartment in the middle of the night when he was sleeping so that I could buy or use drugs. I would do drugs at home in the bathroom without him knowing. I would lie to him and cancel plans with him to have more time to buy and use drugs. I continued to drive under the influence of drugs all the time. I thought our relationship was better now because I wasn’t cheating on him (as much), and we weren’t drinking. I met a guy at the outpatient facility who I ended up hooking up with, though I don’t think Sam ever found out about it. At least when I wasn’t drunk, I didn’t do it in front of him…When I wasn’t drinking, I didn’t scream or cry or throw things anymore. The amount of energy it took to hide the other drugs I was using was exhausting, though. It was also getting quite expensive.

Finally, I just got tired of the lies. I was sick of worrying every second of the day that I was going to get caught using, and I would have to explain it or stop. I was slowly starting to realize that I was going to lose everything I still had that was important to me. I had already lost sports, friends, school, relationships with my family, self-esteem, pride, dignity, and I was close to losing Sam.

At this point, I absolutely hated myself, and I was starting to hate everyone and everything around me as well. I didn’t want to do drugs anymore, but I felt like I had no choice and couldn’t stop.



I would wake up and say that I would not use drugs that day, but I would use them anyway.

I can’t really put into words how miserable and hopeless I was feeling at this time, but I knew I couldn’t go on living this way.

On October 3rd, 2009, I told Sam the truth about my drug use. I told him what I was doing and that I wanted to get clean and that I wanted to make things work between us. I didn’t want to be miserable anymore. I just wanted to live a normal, happy life. If only it were that easy! The next day, Sam and I went into my outpatient treatment center to talk to the counselors about my drug problem and the next course of action. We all agreed I should take the fall semester off from school and try to get into an inpatient treatment facility.

We found a place that would accept my insurance, so we drove to a drug and alcohol rehab center in New Jersey, and I checked myself in. I didn’t have any experience with inpatient treatment centers, and I didn’t realize how scared and alone I would feel. I was only there for 12 hours before I called and begged my mom to pick me up. I couldn’t stand the thought of being away from Sam and home and my family for 30 days. My mom tried to convince me to stay, but I just couldn’t.

The bottom line is I was scared and unwilling to give rehab a chance. Sam picked me up and we went home. Many people thought that coming home was a mistake, but I had my mind set on staying sober, whether I was in a drug addiction treatment center or at home. The next day, I started a full day outpatient program. I attended a rehab program from 7am-5pm for 2 and a half weeks. The first day I was finished with this program, I drank. Sam knew, but I never told anyone else until years later. I just pretended like my sobriety date was still the same. I only had 2 beers, so I thought I could just go back to being sober and not tell anyone.

rae and cat

I started working every day for my mom and continued to attend my original outpatient groups. I went to those twice a week, saw a counselor individually, and worked. I also still pretended that I never drank that night. After taking the semester off from school to try to get my life together, I went back to college for the spring semester. I was happy to start accomplishing things in my life, but I was scared about being back in the ‘real world’ and trying to stay sober.

I was still living at home with Sam and commuting to school. I was attending another new school where I didn’t know very many people, which was scary to me. What was even scarier was that the people I knew from school were people I used to use with or buy drugs from. I was worried that being there would trigger a relapse.

I promised myself I would do everything I could to stay sober. I would go to my classes, come back and spend my time close to home. I knew that if I spent too much time around school, it would be dangerous for me. It was difficult at first because I felt like I was missing out on a lot of the ‘normal’ college experiences, but my sobriety was more important to me. And I did an okay job for a little while. I didn’t go to 12 step meetings or get a sponsor, though, and I just kind of resisted the whole recovery thing in general. I just wanted to be normal, live a normal life, and try not to drink or use drugs. After being clean for 10 months, I ended up relapsing.

6 months into my sobriety, I bought Adderall. I don’t know why Adderall instead of something else, and I don’t remember who I bought it from. I just know that I bought it. I carried it around with me for a day or so but didn’t take it. I went to a meeting and told one of my friends that I bought it, and she threw it out for me. I think I knew it was just a matter of time before I ended up relapsing.

I stayed clean for a couple more months, and then I started having significant pain from my wisdom teeth and had to get them removed. The pain was bad enough before the surgery that I started taking painkillers, and I continued to take them after. The plan was that Sam would keep the painkillers hidden and just give them to me as I needed them. One night, I went to a meeting, and on my way home, I picked up a prescription for painkillers. I can’t remember if this was before or after I actually got my wisdom teeth taken out, but I think it was after.

I immediately took 3 of them (instead of 1) and then drove home. When I got home, I felt so amazing. I hadn’t been high in a while, and it was the best feeling in the world. It’s like I was wrapped in a warm cocoon, and nothing could hurt me or cause me any distress. I quickly realized I took too much and got really sick, then went to bed.

Once I took the painkillers, that was it. I knew I wanted more drugs. I called the dentist the next day and told him that the Vicodin wasn’t really helping, and asked if he could prescribe anything else. I acted surprised when he told me he could prescribe Percocet, which is stronger than Vicodin, and told him I would like to try that instead. Once I finished the painkillers, I stayed clean for a couple of weeks and tried to fight off my cravings, but I ended up giving in.

I was at Sam’s sister’s house, meeting his dad for the first time. I left early to drive my brother home and told Sam I would be home right after. I stopped and bought coke on the way home. I didn’t do it right away because I was trying to decide if I was ready to throw my life away or not. The next morning I was sitting in my car about to head to the gym, and I just decided I was going to do it.

I used cocaine on a Wednesday. Sam was working a little that week and was working all weekend, so I didn’t have a hard time hiding it. But very quickly, it became pretty apparent to him that I was using. From the moment I started using, it was just one big balancing act. Trying to maintain a steady supply of coke and also enough benzos or painkillers (or literally anything) to bring me down while also trying to hide my drug use from Sam and my family was just not possible.

I remember taking 8 Benadryl one night, on top of everything else I was taking, so I could try to fall asleep. I think at this point, it was pretty much inevitable that it was not going to end well. Luckily, this ended up being rehab, not death. Relapse is hard to deal with, and I wanted to use enough so that it was “worth it.”

I contacted the people who used to sell me coke, and none of them had anything. They put me in contact with some other guys, so I called them and set up a time and place to meet them. I went to one of their houses and sent them a text when I arrived. As I pulled up to the house, I remember seeing a car that looked like an undercover police car with a government tag on it of some sort. I was positive that I was being set up by an undercover cop and I was about to be arrested. I sat and waited for a little while, and the guys still didn’t come outside.

The longer I waited, the more convinced I became that it was a setup. But I didn’t leave. I wanted the drugs so badly that I waited anyway. I figured worst-case scenario, I get arrested. Best case scenario, I waited and got the drugs like I wanted. And eventually, the guys came out and sold me the drugs, and that was that.

 Over the next few days, I met with a bunch of different people I’d never met before. I had to find benzos so I could sleep, and I always ran out of cocaine way before I expected to. I met with them in alleyways, in their cars, and always alone. Thankfully, nothing bad happened.

During my relapse, I was still working at my mom’s vet hospital. I was using so much that I could barely make it through the day. I would show up and throw up in the bathroom, then leave early and tell her I wasn’t feeling well. One day, I went to go buy a new phone and had to get out of line and run to the bathroom to throw up. I just kept telling her that I must be getting sick.

The Monday night after I first used the cocaine, Sam asked me if I wanted to tell him anything. I knew he knew that I was using, so I told him what I was doing. I don’t remember exactly what happened afterward, but I do know that I spent the entire night doing cocaine and telling Sam that I wasn’t going to stop – I would stop when I was ready.

At one point, he asked me to give him what I had left, and I said no. He said if I didn’t, he was leaving. I remember watching him walk away, feeling like I honestly didn’t care because the drugs were more important to me at that moment.

I guess Sam called my parents, because Tuesday morning, my parents, Sam, and one of my friends drove me to rehab. I went through the intake process, and at the end of it, they told us my insurance would not cover it. I guess I wasn’t ‘bad’ enough yet and hadn’t been using for long enough. In my mind, this just gave me an excuse to continue using. If I wasn’t bad enough to get into rehab, it must be okay to continue using. I don’t remember what I said during the intake process, whether I lied to them or told them the truth. I imagine, though, that if I had told them the truth, they would have admitted me.

In the week that I was out using, I met up with random strangers in dangerous places to obtain drugs. I spent about fifteen hundred dollars, was mixing drugs, and injecting cocaine. Had I told them all of this, I believe they would not have turned me away.

When I got back home on Tuesday after not getting into rehab, I slept for a while. I hadn’t really slept or eaten since Wednesday and had taken enough Advil PM and Klonopin to counteract the cocaine side effects and knock me out for a little while.

I woke up in the morning, did most of the coke that I had left, and then frantically tried to reach someone who could sell me more. Sam came home from work as I was going to meet someone. He says I called him and told him to come home, but I have no recollection of that. Sam took the keys out of my hands and refused to let me take the car, so I began walking to meet the person selling me coke.

rae rehab

Sam followed me, saying there was no way he was going to let me do this. I walked maybe a mile, and then Sam finally had enough and took my phone. I remember literally chasing him around trying to get my phone back, and finally just falling on the ground and giving up. I started punching concrete walls and crying.

My mom has since told me that we had plans to meet for lunch to discuss what to do about treatment, though I don’t remember that at all. She called me to see if I was running on time, and when she couldn’t reach me, she got worried. My mom, dad, and little brother showed up, and my mom told me she had called the police. She said I had to get in the car and go back to the rehab and try to get admitted again. I told her I would go to rehab, but then only if I could do more of the drugs I had left.

I took the Klonopin I had left and also insisted that she give me some of hers, which she did because she was desperate to get me to go back to rehab. I don’t remember much more. I remember needing to stop on the way to throw up, and I was throwing up blood.

I used the little bit of coke I had left in the bathroom at the rehab before I was admitted. I was so desperate to put any kind of drug into my body that I crushed and snorted some Advil PM that I had with me. The next thing I remember is being in an ambulance. I don’t have any recollection of what happened, but I’m told that I [checked into rehab](https://www.malverntreatment.com/), went to the nurses’ station to have my vitals taken, and just lost consciousness. I stopped breathing and was rushed to the emergency room. I was in and out of consciousness during the ambulance ride and throughout my time in the hospital. I vaguely remember my mom and little brother showing up.

Apparently, I stopped breathing, and my blood pressure was at fatal levels. They gave me oxygen and fluids and ran a lot of tests. Looking back on it, it is terrifying. At the time, however, I was so out of it that I wasn’t scared at all. I was barely conscious, so I don’t remember a lot of it. The next thing I remember is waking up back at rehab, really angry that I was there.

I spent the first 4 or 5 days in rehab sleeping and just letting my body recover. I had lost 12 pounds in 7 days and had barely slept. I also spent those first days calling Sam and my parents, begging them to pick me up and crying and cursing at them when they refused. They knew I needed to be there, and I guess so did I, but I was scared and homesick. On the 6th day, I finally got out of bed and started going to my groups, meetings, and lectures. Around this time, I accepted that no one was picking me up, and I tried to make the best of my time there. I don’t think I understood the seriousness of my relapse and how necessary treatment was until around this time.

I had never actually stayed at an inpatient rehab before, so it was really scary at first. I was always surrounded by people, but being in rehab was one of the loneliest experiences of my life. It was like the world just forgot I existed and continued without me. I learned many things and had to face a lot of things that I wanted to hide from. I had support in the community and in the counselors who worked there, which was great. I got a chance to reflect on what had happened during my relapse and what had caused my relapse.

It was tough to be away from Sam for so long. In total, I was away from him for 2 months (1 month in rehab and then 1 month in a transition house). We had never been apart for more than 4 or 5 days before. We talked on the phone every day, and he wrote me a letter for every day that I was in rehab. He was really great and really supportive, and so were my parents and my little brother.



Being there was hard because I felt like I had so much I needed to fix at home. I needed to figure out what I was going to do about school, and I needed to talk to Sam and see if we could stay together. People were also telling me that I shouldn’t be with him, and everything was very overwhelming at the time. I did go home to Sam after my month in the transition house was over. I went to outpatient and started going to a lot of meetings.

Things were even harder at home, though. I was happy to be home and back with my husband, but I felt like a prisoner in my own house. He didn’t believe a word I said, and I felt like he never would. My relapse affected him just as much as it affected me, and this was not something I was prepared to deal with.

I thought many times about not being with Sam anymore because I just couldn’t handle the guilt of what I put him through. I also couldn’t stand the way I felt about myself when I was around him. I thought if I weren’t with him anymore, these feelings would go away.

It took a long time and a lot of effort on both of our parts, but we were able to start having a better relationship. He probably didn’t believe anything I said until at least a year into my sobriety, but I can’t blame him for that.

It took a lot of time before I could at least start forgiving myself for what I had put my family through. Looking back on the severity of the relapse keeps it fresh for me and reminds me that I don’t ever want to go back there. The last thing I want to do is end up back in rehab. I have things in my life that I’m proud of, and I have goals. I have people who love me and care about me. I could destroy my life instantly if I decide to get high. I also know that I could have died easily, and I am grateful to have made it back and grateful to have another chance.

I have so much more to say about my journey in recovery and life in general. This story takes us up through around 2012. If you want to know what I’ve been up to since 2012, read the rest of my story.