

A Childhood Cut Short: Recovery and Healing after a Parent with Addiction

Posted on November 30, 2020

Having a family member or parent with addiction is definitely one of the hardest things a kid could go through. Especially when one of them is your parent. "Kids don't understand"... Is what you think. My name's Lexi Broughton and I'm almost fifteen. I'm from Mt Washington, Kentucky and I go to Bullitt East High School. When I was young, my dad, Justin Broughton struggled with addiction.

This is our story.

I was just a young kid, so of course I didn't understand what it meant or what was going on at the time. All I knew was that my dad was my very best friend. But there were obviously times when I knew something was wrong. Whenever my dad got in trouble for drug abuse, I was always told that "daddy went to work" and that he would be back soon. Not many children would get that. I was a smart kid though, I knew. Questions I often had in my head were "When is he coming back?" or "Will he even come back?". It was clear to me even at a young age that I had a parent with addiction, and I wanted to do whatever I could to help.

He sent me a few letters and drawings that I've kept still to this day. I'll never forget about them, I never knew he could draw like that. They're so important to me because they remind me of how far we've come now.



Eventually my mom met another man and I had the biggest problem accepting him into my life. I couldn't do it for the longest time. By this time, I lived with my mom and my dad had gone to a [drug treatment facility](#) in Florida. I was still young, but it was almost as if I felt this huge absence. Almost like part of me moved away. "Why'd he leave me?", I always asked in my head.

He lost custody of me for a while and I hadn't seen him for a long time. It felt like forever. I was a daddy's girl and I missed my best friend. The person who took me riding on four-wheelers and fishing all of the time. The person who would drive me around in our old green truck and would blast "our song". I started to understand the situation more and more as I got older. I thought about it all of the time. No kid wants to think that their dad isn't there with them and that recurring thought never left my mind.

Visiting Dad In Florida

I went to Florida to visit him for the first time with my grandma whenever he was able to see me again. I remember this moment so vividly because it was so heart-wrenching and joyful at the same time. As soon as we saw him, I didn't know what to think. My eyes filled with tears and I ran to him. All I kept thinking in my head was "Don't ever leave me again. I'm not leaving you."

We spent as much time as we could together and he showed me the halfway house he stayed in. He introduced me to all of his roommates and seemed like he was doing so great. I know it was hard for him sometimes, I would overhear his conversations with my grandma about hardships he'd go through. I knew he was strong though and that every time something got hard, he'd fight through it.

Leaving Florida was heart-breaking. More like leaving him was heart-breaking. I cried for days missing him and wanting to see him again. I missed him every single day and didn't see him for a while again. I wasn't angry at my dad, I was just upset at the things he missed out on in my life as I got older.

Such as father-daughter dances or lunches at my elementary school, or him not being able to take us on our "father-daughter dates" anymore. Or just simply watching my young-self grow up and not just over a cell phone.

After my dad was out of treatment and sober, he stayed in Florida for a while longer. I never fully understood why he never chose to come home. I would get so upset that he never moved back home. I just thought he didn't want to or that he wasn't worried about me. I knew he did, but it hurt for a while thinking he wasn't coming back home... To me.

Eventually, I went back to Florida to visit him. Things were better and he had not long before this he had gotten a truck, so we were riding around to go get pizza. Later that trip, he told me he wanted to take me to get my nails done and this is where I met my step-mom, Sarah. At first, I was kind of jealous... I was the only girl in my dad's life for so long and I hadn't even had him for that long. But I realized that she was making him so happy, so I was happy.

Seeing My Father Helping Others

My dad had been working for a treatment center in Florida, helping people that were in the same position he was. This was the best thing. He took his faults, fixed them and shared them to inspire others who struggle with addiction to get help.

After about a year, my dad and Sarah rented a house. Visits started occurring frequently and I would go visit every other month or so. A while after my dad and Sarah had lived in the house, we found out that my step-mom was pregnant with my little sister, Logan. I only had brothers on my mom's side of the family so I had always wanted a little sister. I was beyond excited and so happy for them.

They lived in that house for a couple of years until they found a new town home that they liked in Boynton Beach, Florida. At this point, words couldn't describe the pride I felt in my father. He had come so far and met so many amazing people. He would be on the phone for work a lot every day, but listening to him talk to people or someone's family about getting help and him sharing his story was the best thing. It only got better from here.

One day, it was just me and my dad in the truck and he told me he needed to ask me something. "How would you feel about me asking Sarah to marry me?" he asked me. I can't even put into words the excitement I felt and of course I said yes. So, everyone in Florida took a trip to Kentucky and my dad took Sarah out to the Bullitt East football field and got on one knee. We all surprised her and ran out of the locker room. I remember bawling crying, so happy and filled with emotion. Sarah had asked me later on to be the maid of honor in the wedding. This meant the world to me, being able to play this role in my best friend's wedding!

A while after the wedding, we had found out my step-mom was pregnant with my little brother, Cole. My dad was so excited that he was finally having a boy after two girls! It was so amazing to see what my dad had built. Not only did he build up a better version of himself, but he built a beautiful family. They just not long ago bought a new house in Royal Palm Beach. I will forever be grateful for everything my dad has done for me. I visit my family in Florida so often and they take many trips to Kentucky to see all of us. I thank God every single day for the blessings he's given me and my family.

My dad is definitely one of the biggest inspirations in my life. He gave me hope that there's a rainbow after every storm. Watching him grow to be so successful and do what he does for other people is remarkable and so amazing that I wish everyone could witness it. He's saved so many people's lives. One day out of the blue, I got a text message from my dad. He sent me a song, "Not Afraid" by Eminem. "Go to 3 minutes in." he texted afterward. *It was my decision to get clean, I did it for me. Admittedly, I probably did it subliminally for you, so I could come back a brand new me you helped see me through. And you don't even realize what you did, believe me you-.* These lyrics hold the most special place in my heart. My dad got clean, not just for himself, but for me as well. Even though things started out rough, it all came to an end. He knew I needed him and he pulled through.

He's forever and always a superhero in my eyes.

I shared this, not to just talk about our story... But to use it as an example to help people better understand why receiving help for substance abuse is so vital. If my dad would have never gotten help for his addiction, we wouldn't have achieved the great things that we have and I probably wouldn't have my best friend in my life. It saved my dad's life and I don't know what I'd do without him. If you or someone you know struggles with addiction, it's never too late to ask for help.

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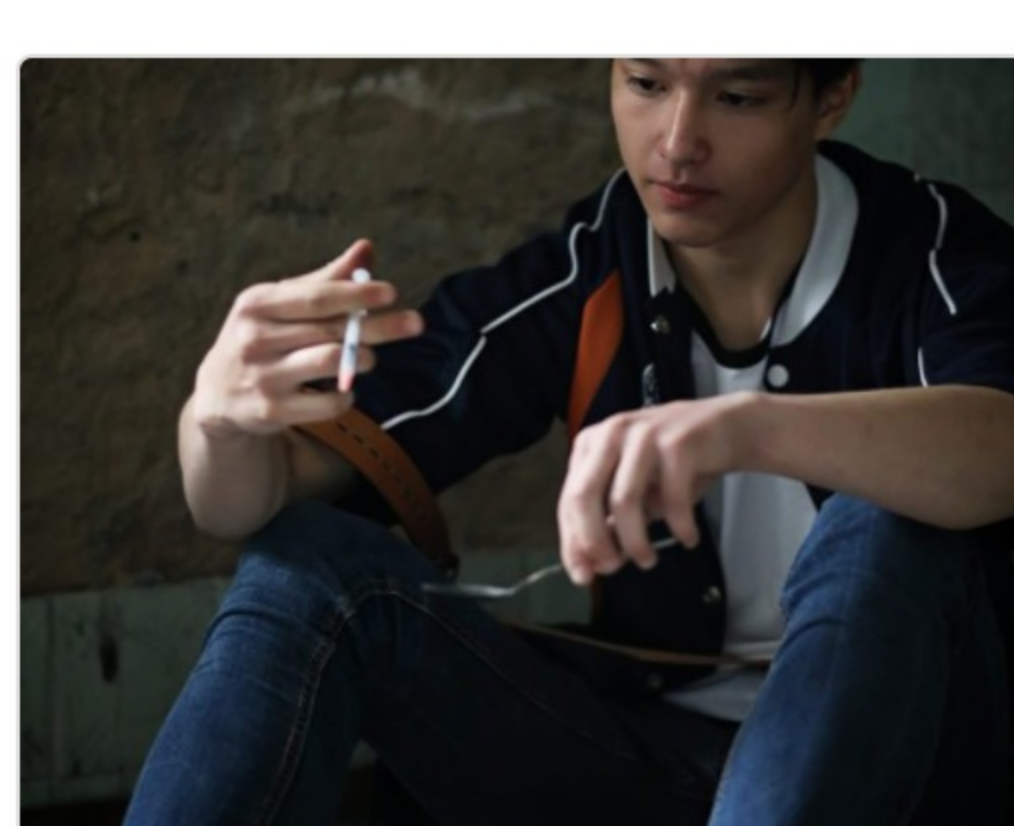
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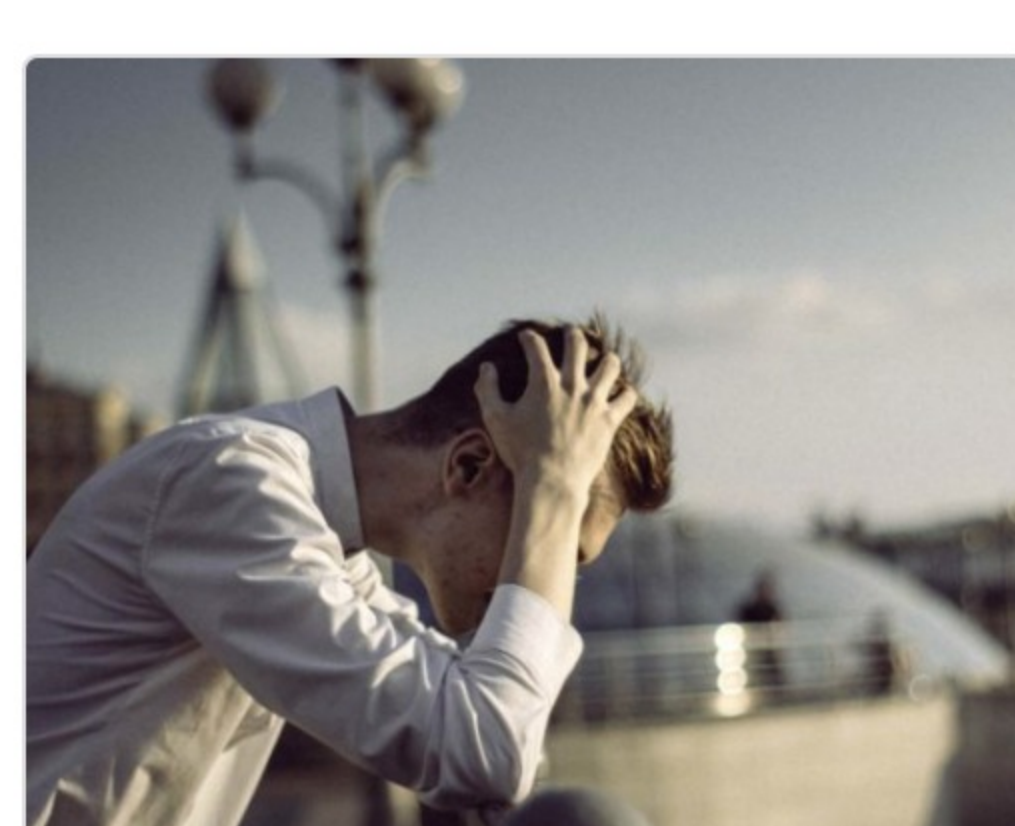
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