

Alcohol and Substance Abuse Impacts the Entire Family!

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I'm not an alcoholic or substance abuser, but I felt like I lived a large portion of my adulthood living the life of one. Being married to an addict, I was always trying to get into his mind, I had to think like an addict. I constantly tried to stay one step ahead of the insanity.

From the outside we looked like a normal family, but behind closed doors, we were all suffering in silence, including my 3 children. Codependency, enabling, low self-esteem, whatever you want to call it, I was an expert.

Isolation was the order of the day, and I wouldn't think of telling anyone how much I was hurting and how trapped I felt. My kids were acting out in anger, and we were teaching them how to carry this dysfunction to the next generation. I loved my husband and my kids, and I didn't want to live that way anymore, but I didn't see a way out.

In 2008, when he went to rehab for the 3rd time, we had all had enough and we started attending a recovery program called Celebrate Recovery. By listening to others share their stories and eventually sharing mine, I was able to see that it wasn't just my husband that had a problem, it was our family's problem.

Then, by volunteering in that program, I was able to use my issues to help others who were going through the same thing. By talking about my past, things I never thought I would tell anyone, I was able to free myself of the anger and guilt and help others gain that freedom too.

I know today that the only way to keep my recovery is by giving back and helping those that need support. My sponsor and accountability partners continue to take the time to listen and be there for me and I need to do the same for others.

I am a sponsor and a leader in my recovery group and recently became a Peer Volunteer. You can read more of our recovery stories of hope. Or contact a Peer to find the phone numbers of volunteers who can listen and help. This is available for all employees and their family members. We offer resources for recovery as well as being available to just listen anytime and it's completely anonymous.

Alcohol and substance abuse takes a toll on everyone around the user, but because those of us whose lives have been touched by it and have found recovery are reaching out to others in the same situations, by sharing our stories, there is hope.

-Sara