

It Would Never Happen to Me

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Before I was truly willing to get help with my alcohol/addiction problem, I was one of those people that thought it would never happen to me. My parents divorced when I was eight, but other than that I have no childhood trauma that stands out where I can say, THAT'S when it all went bad. I was a pretty average kid, a good girl even, growing up with dreams and goals. My drinking problems came on slowly over time.

In 2010, I moved up to the Bay Area from Fresno to become a permanent employee with PG&E. I was a single mother of two kids doing my best to provide and keep it all together. My drinking, and the problems that came with it, really began to ramp up at this point in my life. I couldn't see it at the time, but I had the progressive disease of alcoholism, and my unresolved problems and pain only fueled this fact. Many times, blacking out and upsetting my kids, I got stuck in a horrible cycle of drinking to ease my uncomfortable feelings of loneliness and stress, feeling shame and guilt over my drinking, then drinking to try and take away those feelings of guilt and shame.

After taking a leave of absence through work, seeking many different forms of medical help, thinking I was losing my mind, and only continuing to drink, I finally hit bottom. After bailing myself out of jail following a three-day blackout, I came-to. I had been arrested and charged with felony child endangerment for picking up my six-year-old son from daycare while in this blackout and driving us home. This was not the first time authorities had to intervene. To this day, I still have no recollection of that event. As a result, I lost custody of my six-year-old son and my 14-year-old daughter had to go to Washington to live with her father while I got help.

I called the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) with another sober woman by my side, and they found me a residential facility in my area. My journey to sobriety and many big, beautiful lessons began that day of June 27, 2013. I wish I could say it was one special ingredient that made me want to change and get sober this particular time—instead of the many attempts I'd made before to try and figure out what my problem was. In all honesty, I think I was simply out of answers and ways to try and deny that I had a problem.

I was lucky enough to have the help of the EAP to allow me to keep my job and work on recovering. I met many people in sobriety that had been through hell and back and managed to be living life on life's terms, smiling and laughing even, and I wanted that more than anything.

I got a sponsor, began working a 12-step program, started to rebuild my life, and worked on myself like never before. It took me two years to regain joint custody of my son, but I was able to heal so much and learn many valuable lessons during that time. My felony charges were reduced to a misdemeanor, and eventually dropped altogether after years of proving I was sober and working a program.

I learned how to be of service to my family and to do the next right thing, even if things weren't going my way at that point in time. It's felt like an uphill battle some days, but I wouldn't change a thing even if I could. I've learned to be a different kind of mother and woman. I get to have deep, meaningful relationships today with my children. I get to show them that change is

possible even when it's scary, how to own up to your mistakes, and how to give back to this world. I learned that this journey is not just about me—I've had the opportunity to help other women in similar situations.

I held back on admitting that I needed help because I just couldn't accept that someone like me could end up with an addiction problem. Was it embarrassing? Yes. Do I regret any of what happened and the work I've done? No. I was embraced, loved and received so much help along the way. I know what it's like when you wake up one day and can't believe you are where you are and wonder, how did this happen? My hope is, through my experience, others that were afraid or embarrassed, will reach out because of the people that have walked the path before them and are here to love and help them.

-Marissa