

Coping With a Loved One's Addiction

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I was 14 when I discovered my mom had been using drugs. I found some things at home hidden in cabinets and asked my mom about them, but she covered up what it was. I believed her, but somehow, I knew what was happening.

It wasn't long before my mom lost control and was no longer a "functioning drug addict." She lost her job, we lost our apartment, and we bounced around from hotel to hotel. Our family attributed our circumstances to my mom losing her job; they didn't know this was happening as a result of drug use. My mom always had it together, so I believed that she was going to get through it like anything else. It took almost two years before I told anyone about her using.

Fast-forward to my 16th birthday. I had just finished celebrating with family and discovered later that evening that my mom had started shooting up. I felt like I had just been hit by a truck. How could she do this? What was going to happen to her? I thought she had stopped using. So many questions ran through my mind.

I decided to confront her and tell her that I knew what was happening. We both cried. I sat in my car feeling so alone, panicked, angry and that my whole world was turned upside down. I had to tell my family what was happening so I could gain their support. My uncle told me if she didn't get help, I would find her dead. His words were burnt into my mind and haunted me every day. I didn't know how to pick up from there or how to help my mom, but I got a plan together.

It got a lot worse before it got better; she failed many times. Hitting rock bottom is a real thing and that's exactly what happened before she finally stuck with a program. I really struggled with keeping myself together. I had to take a part-time job while going to school, but I started falling behind. It was then that my mom and I made a pact with each other: if I stayed in school and graduated, she would stay in treatment and graduate from the program. So, that's what we both did!

My mom got sober in 2002, 14 years ago. I am really proud of her, and I am really proud of myself for getting through all of that at such a young age. It wasn't until my adult years that I got myself the help I needed to recover from that rough time. But I put that experience in my back pocket and never looked back.

When I began working for PG&E and discovered the Peer Volunteer Program, I couldn't believe our company offered such an amazing program to their employees. I also couldn't imagine sharing my story. I thought, "There's no way I'll tell anyone at work about my experience as an AI-Anon." But then I remembered how I felt lost and alone, and I realized someone else may feel that way, too. And my story may give them what they need to come out of the dark and reach for help.

I want those struggling to know that I've been where you are. I've felt what you are feeling, and I remember feeling like it was impossible. Yes, it is scary and intimidating, but it isn't impossible. If you can push through what you are feeling and take a chance at asking for help, you will be amazed at what will happen. It is my pleasure to be of service to our employees and their families through our Peer Volunteer Program.

-Jasmine