

Theme: Drugs and Alcohol

Question: How does a drug or alcohol problem impact family and friends?

Teens and parents in conversation

HomeWord

Volume 7, Number 8



Teen Talk

by an anonymous high school student

"Get out of my house, right now I never want to see you again. You're nothing but a damn alcoholic!"

This is exactly what occurred at my house about every two weeks or so. My mother kicked my stepfather out of the house so many times in the past seven years it was ridiculous. The sad part was that he always came back within the next week, and my sisters and I had to act as if nothing ever happened. Experiences like this one

could completely traumatize one's life.

First of all, one has to understand that alcoholism is an addiction and a disease, possibly even fatal. No one person can change an alcoholic. Alcoholics have to change themselves. Probably the most difficult thing for alcoholics to do is to admit their alcoholism to themselves.

When my mother first married my stepfather, everything went relatively well. He attempted to treat us with respect, and my sisters and I did the same. Then the situation grew drastically worse. He would return home drunk every night and simply pass out on the couch. He would neither identify with anyone, nor

would he do any work around the house. My sisters and I helped out, but there is a limit to how much work young children can do. My mother had to become "Super Mom." She had to be the man and the woman of the house, but one person cannot do it all.

My mother had numerous mental breakdowns. These occurred because she could not

handle everything that she was taking on. Face it, having to be both the mother and the father of the house would be exhausting

in itself, but along with raising her children, she also had to take care of an alcoholic husband. My mother is a strong woman, but she just could not take it anymore.

The one breakdown, out of many, that stands out most vividly in my mind was when my mom hysterically stormed out of the house one night and did not return for three dreadful hours. My sisters and I were incredibly worried because she always carried nerve pills around with her, and it is extremely easy to overdose. My stepfather had



Parent Talk

by Sara Fontana

My nephew and godson, Jason, died of an over-dose on Good Friday. The drugs that killed him were not smuggled into the country from some far-off place. They were prescription painkillers, OxyContin and Valium, sold by a street dealer. Dealers usually steal or buy these drugs from prescription holders, doctors, or pharmacies.

These drugs, intended to ease physical pain, are sold to people who are trying to ease

the pain of other addictions. But instead of eliminating pain, these

drugs rob addicts of their lives and cause tremendous pain to the family members who have to deal with the loss of their loved ones.

My sister and brother-in-law's pain cannot be eased. Heart-wrenching sobs will escape them throughout their lives. Jason's two-and-a-half-year-old daughter was robbed of a daddy, his sister was robbed of a brother, my parents and my brother-in-law's parents were robbed of a grandson, and I was robbed of a godson. The whole family has felt this horrible evil that blights our lives. Drugs have robbed us of a precious member of our family.

Yes, it was Jason's choice to become part of the drug culture. He was thirteen then. His friends made a similar choice. Drugs were available everywhere. It was easy to become an addict. His friends didn't say: "Come on, Jason. Take these drugs so that you can hurt your family, live a life of turmoil, and end up dead twelve years from now." They said: "Come on, Jason. It's easy."

Although it's easy to become an addict, it's not easy to live the addicted life.

While it's easy to become an addict, it's not easy to live the addicted life.

Addiction strips a person of integrity and potential. Instead of realizing fullness of life, an addict becomes all that the drug culture wants him or her to be: hooked on drugs, knowing life is meaningless without them; and desperate for money to feed the habit and the drug culture. Once on the roller coaster of addiction, it's hard to get off. But it is not impossible. It takes an attitude of one day at a time, one moment at a time, and a willingness to call on God's help.

I am grateful for this last year of Jason's life. For most of it, he had clear eyes, he was working with his dad, and he was being a daddy to his little

Teen Talk *continued*

passed out on the couch totally oblivious. My younger sister and I curled up on the chair. I was praying, pleading, "Please let my mom come home soon. I love her very much and I don't want anything to happen to her. Please, please!"

Right now, my mom's nerves are back on track a little better, and my stepfather has been out of the house for about a month. She declared, "It's definite this time. I'm filing for a divorce." I want to believe her, but she has said it so many times before that I do not know if she has enough strength to keep her word. I just try to be there for her and tell her, "Mom, I think you're doing the right thing."

From this bad experience, I began to despise everyone who drank alcohol. It took me a long time to accept that drinking alcohol is all

right, as long as it is done in moderation. I also learned that when you love someone you have to love everything about them, not just certain parts. If alcoholics are going to change, they have to change because they want to, not because someone else wants them to.

In conclusion, even though it may sound a little biased, I have a piece of advice to all the people out there: Never marry an alcoholic and don't let your spouse become one. It could be detrimental to you, as well as your children. Take it from someone who lived through it.

This article is taken from I Know Things Now: Stories by Teenagers 1, edited by Carl Koch (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1996), pp. 60-61.



Parent Talk *continued*

girl. But his "friends" kept calling to him: "Come on, Jason. It's easy." Tragically, those voices were stronger than the voices of those who loved him. Jason got back on the roller coaster, and this time it killed him.

People ride roller coasters for fun.

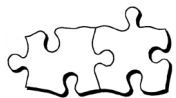
The ride gives them a thrill and a moment of joy. Drugs also deliver a thrill, even a moment of joy. But once you've chosen to ride the roller coaster it's mighty hard to walk away and say you don't want to ride anymore. And while the price gets higher and higher, you find you'll do absolutely anything to pay that price and take that ride. You become obsessed, addicted, self-centered, thinking only about the next ride. You are stripped of your life and live only for the roller coaster.

I pray that Jason's death is a ticket off the roller coaster for his

friends. I know that his death will keep some of his cousins from ever getting on the roller coaster. They know it isn't *real* fun. It not only killed Jason but also deeply hurt those he loved. Maybe his story can help keep those you love off the roller coaster as well.

"I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then that you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Sara Fontana has been in ministry with parents, youth, and children for over twenty-five years. She specializes in helping families recognize God in everyday life. Her husband and their four children are treasured contributors to her presentations and workshops.



To Jason, my godson

When you were alive, I'd pray for you, I'd send you birthday presents wrapped in my prayers. But the shackles of your drug addiction strangled your life and robbed us of any new memories with you.

The old memories are dichotomous. Easter and Good Friday moments mixed all together. Easter memories:

Memory of your eyes when you were two . . . big brown eyes with long lashes.

Memory of watching you cuddle with your mom.

Memory of you riding on your daddy's shoulders.

Memory of you rushing to give me a hug and show me the work you had done during school.

Memory of you holding your daughter and looking into her eyes, mirrors of your own with their long lashes.

Good Friday memories:

Memory of your eyes losing their light because of drug use.

Memory of the worry, frustration, sadness, and hours of prayer for your mom and your dad and you as you struggled with the addiction.

Memory of your mom's voice on my cell phone that last Good Friday, "He's dead, Sara. He's dead."

It's your birthday, Jason. Your life on earth is complete.

We can celebrate your life in its entirety and mourn for what could have been.

We can pray for you as you now move in the abiding places of God's house.

Rest in peace, and may all the love that was given you in this life travel with you now.

Jason, I love you,

Aunt Sara

1/20/02

HomeWord, edited by Leif Kehrwald, is published monthly for parish bulletins and individual households by Family Faith-Life Resources (FFLR) of Saint Mary's Press. Reprint permission is granted for distribution within your parish or institution. For more information on FFLR, visit us on the Web at www.smp.org.

Write to *HomeWord*, Saint Mary's Press, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320
E-mail: lkehrwald@smp.org; phone: 800-533-8095