

The Needle That Ruins Everything

PHOENYX DERNER
ENGLISH 8A

Dear Reader,

Growing up with a family member who is addicted to heroin is one of the hardest thing that a family will have to go through in their life time and, I know that first hand. When I was about 10 years old, I discovered that my cousin Greg had some kind of drug addiction, which we later found out was heroin. His parents were keeping it a secret from the rest of our family because they were ashamed of the things that were going on in their life. As we started to realize what was truly happening behind the scenes, we noticed that Greg had been stealing things like jewelry and guns from our great grandma's house. His parents were spending thousands upon thousands of dollars for his rehab services, trying to "save" him from himself. To cut the story short, in the end, all of that money was a waste, all the stealing was a waste, and all the secrets were a waste because on July 5th, 2011, Greg took his own life. Why? You ask. Because his parents finally decided that they had had enough of his addiction and the things that come along with it that they decided the best option was to turn him into the police. Greg thought his life was over and that he would never see another normal day again so he decided that ending his life was the best option. He might have thought that was the best decision for him, but it wasn't for his family. I watched his parents struggle for years with the fact they had lost their son, along with dealing with the thought that they could've done something to prevent his death. It hurt my entire family and nothing will ever be the same.

I'm sorry to say but this piece will get emotional, there will be parts that are very personal to both me and my family, and I can assure you that there will be some sections that will make you thank god for the healthy, happy people in your family.

Sincerely,

Phoenix

Police Report

Case Number: 765492

Date: June 27, 2013

Reporting Officer: Officer Rob Hines

Prepared by: Kyle Lingers

Incident: Mr. Sydney Lockmin was found on the night of June 27th, with 5 other young men around his age, stealing from the Walmart in Robertsville, MO. The items that were stolen include- Clothing items, food items, alcoholic beverages, and fishing equipment. Blood tests show that all 6 of the young men were under the influence of heroin.

Actions Taken: The police were contacted at approximately 10:23 PM on the evening of June 27th from an anonymous caller saying that they saw the 6 individuals leaving the Walmart after not checking out with their cart. The forces arrived on the scene before the 6 men could leave the scene and they were taken into custody where later blood tests we done on them. Their bond was set at \$10,000 each and only 2 were released from the county jail.

Further information: The court date for Mr.Lockmin was established as July 6th, along with the other 5 young men. The judge for such court date is Harry Macallister, an attending judge for 32 years. The young men are being appointed lawyers and the names of those individuals will be given at a later date.ⁱ

Hey mom,

Just wanted to let you know I'm ok. I know you haven't been too happy with my decisions lately and I know that's why you're sending me here but I don't know, I really don't think it's working. The people here are all super nice and all and I mean they have really good food, and by really good, I mean REALLY good. It's just that I don't feel like I'm getting the help I need. I don't want to waste your money and I'm sorry I feel that way about this. They are too nice here and yeah, I know I'm being separated from the thing that you think is killing me but it's just not working. I know it's probably pointless to write something like this to you because you're going to do everything in your power to keep me in this place. I hope everything is going well with Nick, Evan, and dad. I'm sure this is all hard on all of you. You know you can come visit right? HAHA. Write back when you can and let everybody know I still love them. Hopefully day 5 can get a little easier. ⁱⁱ

Love,

Syd

Sent from:

Willow Valley Opiate Recovery Center: Patient number 2975637

APPROVED BY MAIL SECURITY

Hi Honey!

It's good to hear from you. I know it has to be hard there and I'm sure you're not exactly having the time of your life, but you have to remember why we sent you there in the first place. You haven't made the best decisions lately and your dad and I have finally agreed that keeping you here and continuing to live life this way isn't healthy for any of us. We still love you and we will never stop loving you especially since you were willing to try to get better. Your friends here are apparently not doing any better. Your dad and I saw the Jones' at Target yesterday and they said that Josh is having a really hard time and since you left it's gotten worse. I just wish that they had the money to send him where you are or even if we had a little bit of extra money to help them out, that would be even better. I really hope that day 5 and 6 will get better for you and I hope that you continue get some REALLY good food. I'll let you know if Lisa calls and I'll tell her the address so she can maybe write you. Have you heard from her? I know she's not exactly happy with your decisions but I think, like you're father and I, she still loves you. Love doesn't dissolve away just because someone is addicted to a drug. Evan has a soccer game this weekend and next weekend Nick has baseball so we won't really have time to come see you for a couple more weeks and I apologize about that. Maybe it'll be better for you to be completely separated from your life back home. Anyway, we love you honey and I really hope that this is the best thing for you. Hopefully we'll see you as soon as possible. I'm sorry that you have to go through this.ⁱⁱⁱ

Love, Mom

Please send to:

Willow Valley Opiate Recovery Center: Patient number 2975637

Hey mom,

It's me again, you're not going to be very happy with me but at the end of this week I'm signing myself out of this place. I have to do what's best for me and my well-being and I've decided that, for myself, this is the best option. This place is not helping me and I'm just wasting your money. I'm sorry I have to do this to you but I'm finally putting myself first. I know you're probably going to argue this because you think, I've been putting myself first for months. I'm sorry I couldn't tell you this over the phone. I can sign myself out on Saturday night and I'm going to catch the first flight out. I'll see ya on Sunday morning. Hopefully I can get there in enough time so that I can go to church with you guys. ^{iv}

Love you lots,

Syd

Sent from:

Willow Valley Opiate Recovery Center: Patient number 2975637

APPROVED BY MAIL SECURITY

The Decision That Ruined Everything

It's 6 in the morning and I'm here lying in bed. My first day alone in months, my second day without any drug in my system. I'm shaking and stuck between stealing and getting drugs with the things in which I stole or, finally, at one point in my life, making my family proud. Making people proud isn't exactly in my plans these days though. My drug addiction is to the point that I no longer want to do anything but the things required to get me the drugs that I need. It's really kind of sad if you think about it, that things have gone this far, that I've allowed myself to start something that will one day kill me in one way or another. But to be honest, I cannot help myself.

I know that dad has some guns in his room and I'm more than certain that George will take those in exchange for my fix. He has to. I just need to call him. As I get ready to call George, my stomach drops and I start to rethink my decision but my addiction has got the best of me and I follow through with my plan. George tells me that he will take the guns in exchange for my heroin and I just have to meet him downtown in 30 minutes. The only thing that is going through my head right now is that I have to hurry so that I can get myself there in time. I just have to get myself to the guns. As I go to open the door, I realized that they have the door padlocked. This wasn't really in my plans when thinking of time, but I have to get in there somehow, someway. I sit and start to brainstorm and realize that I can climb out of my window, and climb across the roof to get into their window from there. God, sometimes I actually can use my brain for something.

Now I need to find the extra car keys and get myself there somehow. As I drive, the only thing going on in my head is my family. How have I allowed myself to get to the point where I can't make anybody proud and happy? I've cost my parents, grandmother and brothers so much agony and money. I've ruined their lives, and my own to the fullest extent possible. As I pull up to the building, I see George sitting there, in his car, looking out for anybody who might think what we're doing is suspicious. I mean it totally is. God, this is low. Now, how do I get these guns to him without anybody seeing this? He's walking this way now. I'll open the trunk, stay here, and hope that he can think of a better way to get them to his car than I can. As he takes the guns out of the trunk, I get nervous, so nervous that I think he may just steal the guns and leave without giving me what I

came here for. And in that moment I realize that he is. The only thing I can think now is that I screwed up, I screwed up so bad. What did I just do to myself? I have to follow him. As I follow him through the streets, I slowly start to lose him. That last thing that I need right now is to get pulled over, with no insurance, no license, and with the excuse of “oh yeah officer, I was driving 80 miles per hour through town because my drug dealer just stole my guns and left with my heroin.” Honestly, what the hell was I thinking? I can’t tell my parents about this, I can’t call the cops on the guy because that just sets me up for prison for myself. I’m such an idiot.

As I drive home, I think that I’ve hit rock bottom, I’ve gotten to the point where nothing can get any better and my life is simply falling apart by the day. I feel as if my only option these days is to end my life. Maybe I will finally relieve my entire family of the stress that they have to endure because they were cursed with a child that had to get addicted to heroin and developed a severe disease because of it. This is the point where I’m through with life.

When I get home I sneak through the window, into mom and dad’s room, take a small hand gun, go back to my room, write a note to let my parents know none of this is their fault, and then I get ready to end my own life. Just as I’m about to pull the trigger, I hear dad opening the front door and coming up the stairs. As this point I yell “I’m sorry, Dad!” and in that very moment, I take my own life.^v

Hey, mom and dad, I'm writing this to let you know that none of this is your fault, and when I say none of it, I mean NONE of it. You guys have been nothing but there for me through everything that has been going on the last couple of years. I've continuously stolen from you and grandma, I don't go to family events anymore, I haven't spent one lick of time with my brothers in I couldn't tell you how long, and what's this all for? To get high. To make myself feel a little less of a man and to maybe feel some sort of rush for the day. I really don't know how I let myself get to the point that I'm at but I did and I'm miserable. Absolutely miserable, and I know for a fact that you guys are too. This was my very last resort and there was no way in which I could've gotten any better. I love you guys with every inch of my heart. Let the boys know that I love them too and please, please, please let them know that none of this is their fault either. It's something I had to do for myself. Again, I love you guys and that will never, ever change. I'm sorry I got this far. See you guys on the other side.^{vi}

Love,

Syd

Young Robertsville Man Kills Himself

A young man named Sydney Lockmin, was found dead by his father on the evening of July 5th. Sydney was a 22 year old star football player, was always surrounded by countless friends, and had an unexplainable love for both of his young brothers. It is said that he had been strongly addicted to heroin for a couple of years and after being admitted to Willow Valley Opiate Recovery Center for 8 days, Mr. Lockmin signed himself out and headed home that night. He was kept under strict rules and supervision at home for 3 days after he arrived there. His father says "We left Syd at home for just a couple hours. I had to work a half day so we could bring in some income for the family. I arrived at home from work at 10 in the morning, not expecting for him to even be awake

for the day, seeing that he was never a morning person, so the last thing I expected was to hear a gunshot as I walked in the door." Sydney's parents also shared with us that he had stolen multiple guns from them, not just the one in which he took his own life with. They told us that they believe he stole the guns to get heroin, realized what he did wrong and then ended his life because of that. Sydney will be remembered around town as the boy with the smile on his face and he will never be forgotten.

Sydney's parents want to make sure that everyone in town knows, that heroin isn't worth it. They want to make sure that people know that the pain that they're going through isn't worth it. They want to tell all parents to hold their children tight tonight because you never know when the last time you'll see them will be.

I'M SORRY

I'm sorry Mom

I'm sorry Brother

I'm sorry Dad

I'm sorry Grandma

I'm sorry Aunt

I'm sorry Uncle

I'm sorry Cousin

I'm sorry Girlfriend

I'm sorry Friend

I'm sorry I stole

I'm sorry I ruined our family

I'm sorry I took you for granted

I'm sorry I blew you off the 10th time

I'm sorry I didn't go to your soccer game

I'm sorry I wrecked the car

I'm sorry I spent all of your money

I'm sorry I cheated

I'm sorry I ever tried heroin^{vii}

Don't Be Sorry

Heroin is a drug that can take over a town like a plague, destroy families, and kill many individuals. I've witnessed this first hand and so have Paul and Ellen Schoonover, parents of Matt Schoonover who was a party kid in high school, had crazy amounts of friends, and could be a very successful individual after graduation. However, his dreams were crushed when he slowly made his way from beer and weed, to pills, and eventually to heroin, which he overdosed on the day after he came home from three weeks of rehab on May 10th 2012. "He set off to a Narcotics Anonymous meeting, then a golf date with friends. He was supposed to call after the NA meeting. His parents waited all day for a call that never came. That night, a policeman knocked on their door" (Quinones 7). Like many families who have a member that is addicted to heroin, they tried everything in their power to help their son with his addiction, but sometimes curing the disease that is drug addiction, is a hard feat.

viii

For every 100,000 people in the United States, 200 of them are addicted to heroin and that number is continuing to grow. Between the years of 2002 and 2013, heroin use in the United States increased by 63 percent and the amount of deaths caused by overdose on heroin has risen almost 300 percent (Mohammad 1). Obviously, with these numbers, we can see that heroin is affecting 1000's of people in our country today. How are people trying to fix this epidemic though? While many people look at heroin addicts in a bad light, research has shown that drug addiction is a disease and needs to be treated like one (Mohammad 1). This is why scientists have developed a drug that fights against Heroin addiction, called "Suboxone". In the Huffington Post article, "Treating Heroin Addiction with Suboxone", they say "Suboxone is a medication containing buprenorphine, which is chemically similar to heroin, but without many of the dangerous side effects that come with doing the drug" (2).

Heroin doesn't only brings side effects to the user but also to the family members of that user. Heroin causes the person using it to change into a completely different person, both physically and emotionally. Physically, people on heroin tend to look washed out, have small pupils, and tend to be dazed or lost when an

event is going on (Signs and symptoms of Heroin Abuse 1). Emotionally, a great deal of things happen. Heroin causes the person who is using it to completely separate themselves from their friends and family and it tends to rip apart a group of people. Heroin addicts are known for stealing from their loved ones, getting aggressive with most everyone that comes in contact with them, cheating on their partners, and canceling plans with their children daily. Once addicted to heroin, an addict no longer feels the need to make other people happy, but to make themselves happy with the drug (Effects of Substance Abuse 1). How do you fix this instability without a medication, is the real question. Beth Lameman, writer of the article “Effects of Substance Abuse on Families” for the Chicago Tribune says that “When recovery begins, your whole family should be involved when possible. Family therapy is a good option for recovery with substance abuse” (1). Many addicts don’t think that family therapy will help them in any way but Beth Lameman also gave some enlightenment to that idea when she explains that families are all a whole and when your family is in the know about a person's addiction, they can better understand the situation, therefore helping the addict more with their situation (1).

Having lived a life with a cousin that had a strong addiction to heroin, I know firsthand that these events are true, heroin does tear apart families. Heroin addiction is spreading through our country like the plague and heroin addiction most definitely needs to be cured. So, if you or someone you know is struggling with Heroin addiction, find help. Find a place to go for them or yourself. It’s never too late to get someone off heroin and always remember, that anything is better than dying from suicide or an overdose for a drug that was out to end your life in the first place. Nobody wants to be sorry because they let heroin get the best of them.



This is a photo that represents what heroin looks like. The most common way to inject heroin is through a needle and usually, when injected through a needle, an addict puts the heroin on a spoon to pull the drug into the syringe. Another way to do heroin is to snort it through a person's nostrils. This way is most common with new users because it doesn't leave the marks that injection through a needle does. This is usually done with white powder heroin, which is represented in the picture, to the left of the spoon.^{ix}



A person on heroin doesn't look anywhere close to the same person even after even a couple times using the drug. My cousin Greg was a happy, healthy individual when this photo was taken, his senior year of high school. Soon after, he started heroin. As time went on, because of his addiction, Greg's looks started to fade. His smile started to go away. His perfect skin was now covered in self-afflicted picks and marks. His hair started to thin and his bright eyes slowly faded.

How to Get Off of Heroin

To get off of heroin, a person first needs to realize that what they're doing is a problem. When an individual is in denial about his or her addiction, it makes it very difficult for anybody to be there for them because the individual does not want to help themselves. Second, the person needs to find friends or family members that will be there to help them through the process. Without somebody there to push them an addict quickly can get off track and lose motivation to get off a drug. If a person doesn't have the right support system, rehab is always an option for them. Sometimes, money is an issue for some users, but, since drug addiction has recently been proven to be a disease, most insurance companies will pay for rehab for an addict. Getting off heroin, is in no way easy and there are many organizations that are out there just to help people with drug addiction. One of these organizations is the Soba Recovery Center. To get a hold of someone who would be willing to speak with you one on one about your addiction, call the experts at 1-866-547-6451. The people with Soba say that before a person calls, it's necessary to be open about your addiction and to make sure that you don't hold back your feelings when speaking with a representative because they are there to help you, not to judge you for your flaws. They also say that it is necessary for an addict to ask questions about your addiction. Holding back questions, isn't going to get a person anywhere because the person that they're speaking with will not know what they do know and what they don't know about an addiction (Drug Abuse Help Lines 1).

Works Cited

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End Abstracts

ⁱ This story was completely based off of my cousin Greg. He was caught just a few months before his last rehab treatment stealing these items that I have listed from the Collinsville Walmart.

ⁱⁱ This is placed after the police report to show that since the actions of stealing from the Walmart, his parents sent him to rehab. I did this to add something to show that his family really did care about him and wanted the best help for him.

ⁱⁱⁱ I wanted to write this section just to show that his family and even girlfriend still love him, despite all his bad actions. I can vouch for this because even when my cousin was at his lowest point, my family still loved him, even though we didn't necessarily love his actions.

^{iv} This letter to his mom was something to show that often, drug addicts are in denial about their addiction and even though they know that people are there to help him, they don't quite realize that what they're doing is entirely wrong.

^v This story was actually very personal to me. This was my cousin Greg's story and I tweaked it just a little to make it shorter and to make it fit as "flash fiction." Greg's real story is the same as this but the guns he stole were actually his brothers and when the drug dealer left with the guns, Greg called his brother and told him about his mistake. When he heard, his brother, John, went after the drug dealer and tried to get his guns back (stupid, I know) but since he couldn't get them back, he told his parents about the problem and they finally called the cops on both Greg and his drug dealer. At that point, Greg knew he would probably be in prison for most of his life so he decided to kill himself. Greg decided to do that as he saw the police pulling up to his house, and at that same time my uncle was walking up the stairs to go get him and right then, when my uncle was about to open the door, Greg shot himself.

^{vi} I wrote this to add emphasis to the paper as a whole and to show that people on heroin don't completely stop thinking about their families. While I was writing, I kept my parents and brother in mind, thinking about what my death would do to them and I wanted to make sure that the suicide note was kept personal and made sure that the family knew the reasoning wasn't them.

^{vii} Since I grew up with a cousin who was addicted to heroin, I know firsthand that heroin addicts do these type of things. I wrote this portion to show what heroin addicts do and put some emphasis on the people who get affected by heroin addiction.

^{viii} I think that this paragraph really explains that parents of a heroin addict, sometimes are in denial about the things going on, just as the heroin addict is. They wasn't their kids to be healthy, happy individuals so trust them to go out and do things but when a person who is addicted to heroin and is trying to get off needs constant attention because a relapse can happen at any time.

^{ix} This photo was used with a syringe that my mom brought home from Children's Hospital, where she works. The white power is baking powder and the liquid in the syringe and in the spoon is coffee.