

To Whom It May Concern:

I am from Stafford Springs, Connecticut. I recently moved to another state to seek help for my chemical dependency problem. I was asked to write a quick letter, explaining to whomever, why I started using heroin. In this letter I am going to do exactly that.

I started smoking cigarettes at a very young age. Like every other young child, I wanted to be like my Dad, and my Dad smoked. After a few years of smoking cigarettes very rarely and not inhaling, I was smoking for the sole purpose of being "cool." Nicotine gave that euphoric effect because nicotine is a drug. That is when I started inhaling.

Through middle school I was always a follower. I wanted to be accepted by everyone but most importantly I wanted the "tough kids" to think I was cool. This is when I started getting into small trouble. Getting detentions, not doing my homework and staying out with my "friends."

My drug use was nothing more than that in my middle school years, however when I got to high school, things started changing rapidly. My freshman year, I was a huge "pot-head." All I wanted to do was get high and go to the Friday night football games at the high school because that's what everyone else did. I was prescribed Adderall XR as a coping mechanism for my severe ADHD. Not only did I abuse that myself by sniffing it, I also sold it to the upperclassmen frequently. That was my ticket into their crowd of friends and my ticket into acceptance. I knew no matter who I talked to or hung out with I am a very personable guy and everybody accepted me. Unfortunately, I did not feel that way on the inside which is why I was doing these stupid things.

Alcohol was introduced to me at a young age also. My friend's older siblings were old enough to drink and would slide us the occasional drink. That right there started to become my weekend thing to do. Strictly because it made me feel good about myself. At this point in my life, alcohol was usually around along with pain killers. Painkillers and alcohol do not mix at all but I figured if I took a little less pain killers and a little less alcohol I would get more messed up than if I drank an entire handle of vodka. Over time I started leaning away from the alcohol and leaning more towards the pain killers. Then solely on painkillers. A time came when pain killers were becoming too expensive and a "friend" said that I should try this (heroin). It was exactly what I was looking for. 1/5th of the price of painkillers and the heroin was much stronger. I loved that about it.

Now, at this time, I was strictly using heroin. When I was happy, sad or angry it didn't matter. I used. It was very accessible and very cheap. I knew that heroin is bad for me but I did it anyways. I did it because at this point I was already dependent on opioids. That is where my two and a half year run started.

In such a small town like Stafford, where everything is spread out and not much activities for the non-athletic kids, it is very easy to get caught up in the wrong people doing the wrong things. I also believe that drug outreaches to the community can be very vital. Especially for the younger middle school and high school kids. Kids and their parents need to be well educated on drug dependency. My using came out of nowhere with my parents, they had no idea. That right there says that even though you have children with good grades and play all these sports, that you think are angels, really aren't. I understand that people make mistakes, that's just exactly what we do. Mistakes in the chemical dependency game are mistakes that shouldn't even exist but unfortunately it does. For me something that would have gone a long way, would be getting people involved in community meetings, outreaches maybe at

Olympic Field, or something to educate the community about the seriousness of these drugs, the seriousness of the lives that they impact as well. They do NOT impact just the user. It has the biggest domino effect that I have ever seen in my entire life.

The road to getting "better" all lies into how bad do you want to get clean. How far are you willing to go? It is a battle I will fight for the rest of my life. Of course I wanted to get clean for my parents and extended family, but I needed to get clean for me. I have to want it. Something bigger than wanting to get clean, I needed to know who I need to cut ties with, and who was a safe person for me to be around. At my lowest point of my active using, I was able to quickly identify people that I consistently associate with, with people that I needed to cut ties. During the past two and a half years multiple people have tried to reach out to me to catch up, but without any offence, I needed to look out for myself first. Hanging out with the people like family that have the best intentions for you , consistently putting yourself first and having the desire to get clean, has had all the significant roles in my 2 and a half year clean streak.

This is real. This is sad. This is life. Heroin is everywhere. It is severely frightening. It is out there, and it is waiting.