

# The Other Side

The mother of a young addict takes stock of the long year and offers her well-earned advice. *by R. M.*



**I remember our kids' karate instructor saying, "All you have to do is a little better each day. Next year, you'll be 365 times farther along."**

That simple premise from my son's youth is an inspiration for me—the journaling parent of a young-adult addict. To move forward, I took stock of the last 365 days. The 2011 entries revealed my son's spiraling addiction during a frantic January and a fast-forward February but a year of clarity and serenity nonetheless.

Our concerns began in 11th grade, continued through a near-miss graduation and escalated when my son pissed away a substantial college scholarship. We had repeatedly found evidence of drugs and confronted him, but during counseling, he always downplayed his use. In reality, he had been getting high five times a day even as he aced ACT tests and sports tournaments. Ultimately, he delayed college until second semester 2011. On Jan. 15, 2011, our doubts festering, we dropped him off at college.

Since then, we've watched our smart kid do some pretty dumb things, some of which have landed him in the hospital emergency room and detox. He's been kicked out of campus housing, lost his spot on the men's tennis team, dropped out of classes, racked up debt, pawned belongings, sold his plasma for cash, lived in a storage closet for the summer, stolen his siblings' wallets and we no

longer let him have a car or live in our home. Each day forward, we decreased enabling and increased detachment with love. My son agreed to an evaluation but entirely disagreed with the assessment of chemical dependency and mental health concerns and flat out rejected treatment, running away from a wilderness facility nine days into the program.

Today, we are ever concerned about his path but grateful for our own recovery as a family. He has found a job and housing but continues to fund an active drug addiction. We have regular contact with him and hope that our unconditional love lays the foundation for him to opt for a healthier, happier path. Ours has been an uphill battle but one I'd fight again in much the same way. And though our son is not out of the woods yet, I believe we're many days into winning this war. Some tips from a veteran parent:

- **Benefit of the Doubt** Only extend it so many times before insisting on a chemical dependency assessment.
- **Broken Rules** If they keep breaking the rules despite the consequences and can't keep promises, it might be that substance use is beyond their control and beyond yours.
- **Trust your Parent Intuition** Most likely you're not overreacting, particularly with a young addict.
- **A Clean Slate** Wipe it clean once, twice. Put away the eraser.
- **Befriend the Parents** Other parents will support you. Some will not see eye to eye, but at least you'll know where they stand when it comes to your kid and theirs.
- **You'll Make Mistakes & Progress** There is no such thing as perfect parenting, just love.
- **Take Care of Yourself** Explore online communities and blogs in addition to support and recovery groups such as Al-Anon.
- **Count the Days** If you're one day into it, you're one day wiser. Try not to focus on what you think you did wrong. Instead, celebrate the sum total of your own recovery in days, hours, even minutes if you have to. ■

*Speak your mind as a member of an addict's inner circle. Send your thoughts to editor@reneweveryday.com.*