

## A Real Mom: Maybe this will be the day

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Every morning my husband says, "Maybe today will be the day." I've admired his anticipation only to commiserate with him each time when it wasn't the day. Through everything, we've maintained hope and belief that our son's life will go in a more positive direction, if not today, someday.

In wondering if and when he'll be ready for change, we've gone through our own readiness to accept and adapt. We've gone through concern. We've exhausted benefit of the doubt. We've swung back and forth from desperation to hope. We've practiced detachment and connection. We've conveyed encouragement, sometimes with patience and sometimes with impatience. We've never given up, and we never will. After all, we are his parents.

## This Day, This Night

The other day my son texted that he was tired of doing what he was doing and not getting anywhere; he wanted to talk and he needed a warm place to sleep. Immediately, our intuition said this wasn't going to be the same conversation we'd had a handful of times before. (Although a tiny bit of doubt entered our minds when we picked him up and he said he didn't really know if he had anything to say oh, boy, not a false start, please.)

Of course, we talked. Moreover, we listened. Some of the conversation was not pretty. Fortunately, other parents who are living with a young adult's addiction and mental health have related that through conflict comes clarity. How grateful I am for that reminder.

Sure enough, it wasn't just us, but our son who attained clarity that evening. Further, our collective clarity is seeded in hope and belief, and it is the beginning of a shared commitment to move forward together. In this entire journey, this is the most promising development and seemingly the most sincere.

After a number of phone calls and internet searches, our son started an outpatient program a few days later! He still has some trepidation and uncertainty about stopping use, but he's showing a willingness and open mindedness that hasn't been there in a long, long time. It's centered on the root causes of how he's feeling, the presence of mental illness and the impact of his drug use including its consequences on his life, self-esteem and fulfillment.

Following his first treatment day, he was upbeat and said he hadn't felt this optimistic in a long time. At the end of the first week, he was smiling more - genuine smiles - and he was far more receptive to the possibilities of pursuing a happy and healthy life. We are so happy for him.

## Time Will Tell

What a difference a year makes. This time last year, I was on a business trip and got a phone call that he had been in the ER and detox after being found passed out in the snow in subzero temperatures.

I'll never forget him saying, "Mom, I really goofed up again," as he told me what he could remember. Since then, he never landed at the hospital again, but his use continued and consequences took his life in directions even he didn't expect.

We are definitely in a better place today and certainly in a better place than we were a few weeks ago. Undoubtedly, we are in a better place than a few months ago, and with certainty, a better place than we were a year ago.

## The Beginning of Possibilities

It reminds me that in parenting, the expression, "This too shall pass," is as applicable to infant and toddler woes as it is to addiction and mental health.

Patience, faith and sharing the story make all the difference. The days ahead will bring challenges, but if he sticks with it, it will bring increased support and healing over time. This didn't happen overnight and it won't change overnight, but it is ripe with possibilities.

A caring and articulate person who often participates in an online community for parents of addicted children offers good counsel which I share here: For all you parents out there in the midst of the chaos that drugs and alcohol bring, know that there is HOPE. If you read about progress, know it comes after years of struggle. There is no magic pill, just a lot of hard work. But it can happen, your child can begin the process of recovery and he or she can start to have more good days than bad days. Our children can have successful lives and wonderful futures.

Today, I know that, and I think and hope my son is beginning to know it, too.

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