

Lybert Family Story

Tyler's Perspective

My name is Tyler Lybert and I am a recovering drug addict. I started experimenting with drug and alcohol at the very young age of 11 years old. Alcohol was introduced to me by older people in 6th grade and the only reason I started was because I wanted friends. I saw alcohol as an opportunity to make those friends so I started to drink and party on the weekends. Eventually I was introduced to weed in 7th grade and saw it as not that harmful so I started to smoke. I quickly became an everyday user and started to make really bad choices. I was arrested when I was 12 for underage drinking and ended up getting arrested 16 more times after that for the same reason.

Once I got into high school it opened up my world of partying to a lot more people who were doing the same things as I was. So drugs and alcohol became a way of life to me. Nothing else seemed to matter. Grades, school, football, and family became less and less important as drugs and alcohol were more the focus. Pills, more specifically OxyContin, were introduced to me when I was 15 and I couldn't resist. It was something new and exciting and I didn't have the will power to say no. Once I had said yes to my first hard drug, I rarely ever said no to anything. Acid, mushrooms, cocaine, or anything put in front of me was never refused.

I ended up getting expelled from Arrowhead High School, and Devine Redeemer, and eventually landed back at Arrowhead's alternative program. There I graduated with an HSED.

Once I got out of high school I had a new freedom to party more and do more of what I had grown to love so much. I had tried Heroin in high school but it had always scared me so I stuck to pills. At this time in my life I was already a drug addict and had that constant need to use all the time. The pills were becoming too expensive so I did what most people who can't afford to do pills anymore do, I switched to heroin.

The cost of drugs outweighed what I was making at work so I had to resort to different sources of income. The easiest source I saw at the time was to steal. So that's what I did, I started to rob people and steal anything I could. The sad part is that the easiest people to steal from was my family. I stole and forged personal checks, business checks, cash, jewelry, and even TV's. Anything I could steal I would. I didn't like doing it but I had to. The voice inside my head was too loud and the only way to quiet it down was to get high.

This went on like this for years. Everyday I woke up hating myself, asking myself how can I keep doing this. Every morning I would avoid life because I didn't want to face it anymore. I hated my life, I hated everything about it. I had crushed every opportunity that was ever put in front of me, I had gone nowhere in life, and I was destroying my family. I hated what I was doing but I couldn't stop. I was an addict and drugs were more important.

Eventually it came to a point where I hated my life so much that I couldn't find a reason why I was still living. I started to wake up praying that I wouldn't wake up anymore. I started praying that I would die. Every morning I woke up was a disappointment that it hadn't happened yet. We had tried multiple different treatments, inpatient, IOP, Methadone, Suboxone, and nothing worked. So my conclusion was that being sober wasn't possible, and that my only way out of this would be death. I figured maybe if I died my family could finally get some peace, maybe if I die my family can finally lead the lives they were supposed to lead without me having to drag them down anymore.

My family was at the point where they couldn't take it anymore either. They had been living this hell for 10 years and had tried everything. So they decided there was nothing more they could do for me and they kicked me out. I went down to Milwaukee and lived in a drug house for a bit. I was done, I couldn't take life anymore. I hated everything about my life and couldn't see a way out of it. It was then that I wanted to finally end it all and take my own life. I was in a dark room by myself with knife ready to end it all, when I got a phone call from my mom. She said "you have 2 options; you can keep doing what your doing but we never want to see you again. You're not welcome at our house, you can't call us, if you choose this we never want to see you again. Or you can go inpatient and we will support you %100."

I went into inpatient and spend 5 and a half months in inpatient. There I had to learn how to live again. I had to relearn how to do everything. I had grown up learning to lie and steal, and manipulate. They had to undo all that and teach me how to live again.

My family has been here every step of the way and I am proud to say that I have ben sober for 7 years.

Ashleigh's Perspective

My name is Ashleigh Nowakowski and I am Tyler's older sister. When Tyler and I were little, we were inseparable, we played video games, Ninja Turtle's and house. As we got older and more involved in our own sports and activities, while I was doing really well, Tyler started making bad choices including drinking and using drugs.

At first, I thought he was just being a teenage boy and he would grow up and grow out of it. But he did not and I began to hate him. I hated him for my parents fight all the time. I hated him for my mom crying every day. I hated the fact that every time the phone would ring at our house everyone would jump thinking is this phone call that he is never coming home again. I hated even coming home from school because I didn't know what I was going to come home to, were the cops going to be there, were my parents going to be fighting? I wasn't known for my academic merits or my great horseback riding ability, I was known as the drug addict's sister. The thing I hated the most was how someone I loved so much could turn around and hurt me so badly.

As a sibling, I felt like I had to be perfect. I felt that if I could get the best grades and be the best at my sports, maybe I could keep my family together. I often felt like the middle man in my parent's fights. I did everything I could possibly think of to keep my family somewhat normal.

Our family never took trips to the Dells or camping or family vacations because of the fear of what Tyler would do. Tyler robbed me and himself of having those experiences.

I also felt neglected by my parents. They were so focused on Tyler 100% of the time that they forgot about me. They would come to my horse shows and cheer me on, but they were never 100% there. They were always concerned about where Tyler was and what he was doing.

In the deepest darkest times, I would secretly wish that he would die. I thought that if he did die, he wouldn't have to fight the demons anymore. I also felt that if he did die, then we would have to worry about him 24/7.

Tyler didn't go into treatment until after my wedding. Tyler's drug use was so bad during the planning of my wedding that I couldn't even have him stand up. I didn't believe he would be alive to see me get married. I thought if I had him stand up and he died, then I would have had

to explain to everyone at my wedding why there was a missing groomsman and I didn't want to have to that.

When Tyler decided to go into treatment, I thought it would not work because it hadn't worked before. So it took me a good year and half to trust him and want to be around him again. I had to figure out how to separate Tyler the drug addict from Tyler my brother because they were two completely different people.

Today, Tyler and I are closer than ever before. I am so lucky and grateful that he is sober and alive. But, there will always be that fear that at any day he could go back to using.

Rick's Perspective

My name is Rick Lybert and I am Tyler's father. I am not the same man I was 10 years ago. Back then, I was a very angry man and it was because of what Tyler was doing to my family. I watched Sandi for many years in a deep depression. It got so bad she couldn't even get out of bed. And I was mad at Tyler because he just couldn't stop, no matter what I did. The fighting, the yelling, the so-called house arrest, he just wouldn't stop.

I was brought up to believe that as a father it was my job to protect my family. But Tyler's addiction was out of my control and I could no longer protect them. Even Ashleigh could no longer take it and she moved out of the house, I wish I could have gone with her.

It wasn't until we met Charlie, Charlie was Tyler's drug and alcohol counselor in inpatient. Charlie told us that Tyler couldn't stop, he was an addict. What he told me next was something I'll never forget. He said "In order for Tyler to change, you have to change to." I can remember thinking, "why do I have to change? He's the one with the problem." What he was trying to tell me was that if nothing changes nothing can change. So we did start to change, and we saw a change in Tyler.

I honestly never thought we would be in the place we are today. Tyler was an 80-pound heroin addict. I used to call him the walking dead. Sandi even had his funeral planned. Today, we are so very proud of Tyler and the man he has become. We have met so many families that are not as fortunate as we are.

Sandi's Perspective

My name is Sandi Lybert and Tyler is my son. Tyler was a great kid growing up. He was always happy and outgoing. When Tyler started to hang around different friends and using drugs and alcohol, he changed. He became withdrawn and angry. I watched my son dissolve in front of my eyes into a drug addict, a monster.

I feel guilty because I missed the signs of drugs use. When I finally caught on to what he was doing and did start to see the signs, I ignored them because I didn't know what to or where to go for help. I felt that if I loved him enough and did everything for him he would quit. I began to enable him. I lied to my husband because I didn't want to fight anymore. I lost who I was as a person, a wife and a mother because I was so consumed with fixing Tyler.

Tyler destroyed my life, his dad's life and Ashleigh's life for 11 years. We can never get those 11 years back. Tyler would yell scream, swear at me at the top of his lungs about what a terrible pathetic mother I was and how much he hated me because I was the fault of all of his problems. He would push me against the wall and punch holes around me and verbally abuse me until I gave him what he wanted. And even as I was crying, curled up, scared of my own son

and his anger, he would walk away and not care as long as he got what he wanted. Then there was the soft side of Tyler when he would try to stop using. It was very hard to watch him withdraw; the sweating, shaking, vomiting, the begging to make it all stop. That broke my heart.

When Tyler received his third DUI, I went to the jail to see him. He was in an orange jumpsuit and I couldn't touch him. I looked in his eyes and I saw nothing, he had nothing left. I left the jail that day and said "I am loving my son to death." So I went home, told Rick all the secrets I had been keeping and we made the hardest decision of our life, to kick Tyler out of the house.

When I called Tyler, who was living in the drug house, to give him the ultimatum, I honestly didn't know if he would accept the offer of help. But, he did and we as a family, worked on his recovery together. I am so very proud of the person Tyler has become today.

Wisconsin Barriers

- 1) There needs to be more treatment options for adolescents and people who cannot afford treatment. We send most adolescents out of state because treatment centers here won't take them unless they have a dual diagnosis. Also, for those who don't have insurance, they have to go to Health and Human Services where the wait time to be seen can be 6 weeks or more.
- 2) Adolescents can refuse and walk out of treatment at the age of 14. This leaves families hopeless. If their child has a drug/alcohol problem, and they refuse treatment, what are parents supposed to do? They continue to live in a vicious cycle until their child turns 18 and they can kick them out.
- 3) Funding for prevention. The average age of first use in Wisconsin is 12 years old. Kids need to hear clear and consistent prevention messages from 6th grade until 12th grade. In an age where everything is real life, reality shows, facebook, snapchat, etc, kids want the same prevention messages, from real people who have lived it. Where prevention has the most impact is in schools where everyone hears the same message. Currently, schools don't have funding for prevention. We have teachers who pay out of their pocket to bring us in. Our greatest chance to stopping this problem is to educate them before they make that first choice to use. Thank you for your time.