

Letter to share

The last time I was narcan'd was different because that time I actually wanted to stop using. I'd say I wasn't your typical addict, but there's no such thing anymore. We're your sister, brother, aunt, babysitter, cashier, family friend, student, or nurse. We're that person that looks just like you, but can't make eye contact because we're ashamed and broken hearted of the path of destruction that we've caused. Many of us want your help, but can't imagine what the thought of living life without the comfort of the buffer against reality will be like.

I had been clean from opiates for almost 3 years when I started again. I had found a bag of pills in a parking lot. "Who loses their drugs?!", I had thought in disbelief. A 10 mg. oxycodone became a bag of heroin in two days. The self-hatred and secrecy came rushing back. I knew I could never get the high I was craving but something was better than nothing. It was like fighting the ocean. The pull was stronger than my heart and my body could bare. After a week, I started getting sick when I wasn't using. I told myself every time would be the last. I thought since I was sniffing, not injecting, that it wasn't as bad.

I did half a bag. At my worst, I'd do 3 at a time. I was with someone I trusted. I don't remember going out, just waking up. I stared at my friend, who was breathing heavy and drenched in sweat.

"Do you have any clue what just happened?!"

"No."

"You fell out. I had to narcan you three times. I shot it in you and you didn't even stir. I told you to be careful. I have to go now. Meet me later". I couldn't have told you what day it was. I could barely remember my name. Had I just used again? Physically, physically I had never felt like this. Imagine you have the worst flu of your life. Then run a marathon. Then get hit by a mack truck. Every bone felt like it weighed 600 lbs. I was in instant withdrawl. I was drenched in sweat. I was vomiting. No matter what I felt like though, I had to put my game face on and get back to the real world. I couldn't have anyone hold me and tell me it would be ok. I couldn't have anyone nurse me back to health. I couldn't take Tylenol, use a cold compress, and lay down. I had to get up and appear normal. And there was only one thing in this world that could make me feel that way.

I've never heard anyone discuss the shame involved in overdosing. The addict is treated, given a colorful pamphlet about rehab, told to go to a meeting, and that's it. Thanks for the advice. I just knowingly put a substance into my body that almost killed me, but because you gave me a pamphlet, I'll stop using now. We use because we're broken inside. This overdose just breaks us a little more. One more thing to hide and we're used to that. **(OVER)**

Why not go to treatment, you say? Why not take the help? Because right now all my body wants is to feel well. Not get high, but just to make the hurting stop. Physically and emotionally. An hour later, that's what I did. Crouched behind a dumpster, behind a convenience store, throwing up. I snorted another half bag. It spread throughout my body. I was warm and numb at the same time. Relief spread into my head, arms, and legs, but not into my heart. That kept on hurting.

"She's using again. She only cares about herself", they'd say, if I asked for help. Back to being the family f*ck up. Back to being a nameless face in a multibillion-dollar industry that doesn't care if I'm clean after completing their program. If I don't have insurance, they don't want to help me anyways. If I do, they almost welcome another relapse because it's another dollar in their pocket. The shame of what I've done doesn't even have words. I hate myself more with every breath I take. I don't even want to get high anymore. I don't want this to be my life. I want normalcy. I crave it. But my body and my heart don't have the strength to fight it. Maybe this is who I am. Maybe this is all I really ever will be good at. Maybe this is my life. If it's always going to come back to this then why bother trying?

Half a year later, I am trying. I'm trying and I'm doing it. Not because I went to rehab, not because I'm on a maintenance drug, but because I am loved. I am loved, and I love them back. And I love them more than the drug.