

# A Letter to My Family From an Addict

I want to introduce myself to you; I'm your qualifier and the reason you're here. You believe just because you gave me life and raised me that you know me, but you really don't. I'd like to use this time to introduce the real me to you so maybe you can gain a better understanding of why I am the way I am, why I do the things I do and why I've done some of the things I've done. I don't know if I was born an addict but I do know the first time I got high an addict was born.

First of all, you have to accept the fact that I think differently than you do. Some of this will make sense to you and some of this will sound like excuses that you've heard before, but just know that the ones that sound like excuses are based on my fact, my perspective, and the knowledge and experience of the people who are trying to help me get clean. These are people I have placed my trust and faith in because all they want from me is to succeed in my endeavor to stay clean for another day.

You have your own goals for me like going to college, getting a job, getting married and finally having kids so you can have grandkids and can show all of your friends their pictures. See, these are your goals for me and not necessarily my goals for myself.

Let me try to explain how I see things. See, you think I have a drug problem but I don't; I have a living problem. You think I use drugs but the reality is that drugs use me. Drugs are for those of us that can't handle reality, and reality is for people like you that can't handle their drugs. To me, reality is a nice place to visit but I really don't like living there. I live in constant fear of letting you down; of not living up to your expectations. I put off doing things out of fear and you call me a procrastinator, but procrastination is just a 5 syllable word for fear.

Drugs make me feel alive and normal, but they also make me paranoid, incoherent and both destructive and pathetically and relentlessly self-destructive. Then I would do unconscionable things in order to feel normal and alive again. Drugs gave me wings and then slowly took away my sky.

I looked to drugs for courage and they made me a coward. You say that I had always been a sensitive, perceptive, joyful and exceptionally bright child, but on drugs I became unrecognizable. You should try looking in the mirror and not knowing the reflection looking back at you. I long for the day I am able to look in the mirror and be OK with the person I see looking back.

Like all kids, when I was really young I used to think there was a monster in my closet and under my bed and you would come into my room and reassure me that there wasn't one by opening the closet and looking under the bed. Now that I am older you can't convince me of that anymore and it's not your job to. But since I found drugs I've come to the realization that there is a monster; but it's not in my closet or under the bed but inside of me, and that if I can't learn to ignore it, it will destroy me.

When I first started getting high it was pleasurable for a while; I had finally experienced nirvana, and then the euphoria wore off and I began to see the ugly side of my using and I experienced hell. I found the higher the drugs got me the lower they brought me. After a while I faced 2 choices, either I could suffer the pain of withdrawal or take more drugs.

I did the withdrawal thing more times than you'll ever know and it's not pleasurable at all; in fact it's just the opposite. If you remember there were times where I said I couldn't go to school or work because I had the flu, but more times than not it was because I was going through withdrawal. I guess the best way to describe withdrawal is insufferable depression and acute anxiety — a drawn-out agony.

Some of the times I choose withdrawal because I didn't want to use anymore, that I hated who I had become, but for the most part it was because I didn't have a choice in the matter...I had run out of drugs. You would think that after experiencing the emotional and physical pain of withdrawal that I would never let myself go through that again...right? See that's how you see it, but to me it just became a part of my using and a consequence I was willing to pay. You may call that insanity...I call that life.

I've been to enough meetings to know the readings by heart and one of the phrases that jumps out at me every time I hear it, is: "when we use drugs we are slowly committing suicide". I never thought of it that way but now I totally understand what it means...but still I use. I'm sure you remember the show Mash; it was pretty popular when you were growing up. The theme song is actually titled "suicide is painless" and in its context, I'm sure it's true. But the slow suicide of my using is not painless in the least; I feel the pain and can see the flame of my life getting fainter every time I use.

All those times you yelled at me for my using you gave me exactly what I needed to feed my addiction. You thought you were doing it out of love but you were actually justifying to me what my mind had convinced me I was a long time ago. I look at myself as a failure; as a complete waste of space. There is a line from a song called Southern Cross and this line defines my past and it goes: "I never failed to fail because it's the easiest thing to do".

When you yell and scream you just confirm to me that I am a failure and after a while it becomes common place; not to mention expected. It is one thing if I think of myself as a loser or failure but to know that's how you see me as well makes it easier for my mind to convince me to use. My basic problem is that I flee from those who want me and I pursue my rejecters.

There are a few things you can do if you really want to help me. I know by telling you these things I'm actually cutting off my main money source...you. I will never stop using as long as you keep giving me money or supporting me. I can only stop using when I hit my bottom and only I can put down the shovel and quit digging.

When you bail me out, buy me a car, pay for my rent or give me money you aren't helping me at all; you are only handing me the shovel again and telling me to keep digging. You keep letting me come back home to live because you think you're helping me out but if

you're honest, you'll realize that you are doing it for purely selfish reasons. When you know I'm in the room next door you sleep better.

The last thing I'll confess to you is the real reason I steal from you. I steal from you because I'm counting on you not calling the cops on me. I count on you not wanting me to go to jail; to have a criminal record. I steal from you because you keep letting me move back home.

You make the mistake of thinking that recovery is simply a matter of not drinking or using drugs. And you consider a relapse a sign of complete failure and long periods of abstinence a complete success. But these perceptions are too simplistic. My life is anything but simple and I'm not just talking about my using drugs.

The way my mind works, nothing is as easy as just doing it because my mind tries to convince me not to do it. It doesn't matter how simple of a task it is...even unloading the dishwasher is a mind struggle for me. My mind also loves to make every little thing that goes wrong a major crisis.

Let me try to explain this in as simple terms as I possibly can. Let's say we both go outside in the morning and our cars don't start. You go in and call a mechanic and I go in and call suicide prevention. I'm what they call a W.C.S person; which stands for worst case scenario. They say a mind is a terrible thing to waste; well my mind is a terrible thing to listen to.

Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be...mine won't let me be happy. My mind keeps reminding me that there is only 18 inches between a halo and a noose.

Relapse isn't a requirement but it does happen to quite a few addicts. The hard truth is that if there were 50 addicts in their 1st meeting together, more of us will be dead in 5 years than will have 5 years clean. The last time I relapsed it was because the bottom fell out faster than I could lower my standards. It's really difficult to solve a problem with the same mind that created it and God knows I've created a lot of problems for myself...and for you.

I hope someday you will realize that I am not a bad person trying to get good; I'm a sick person trying to get well. I suffer from the disease of addiction. If you believe this you won't be so critical of me. For a critic is just a person who goes onto the battlefield after the battle has been fought and shoots the survivors.

Believe me when I say this; I don't want to be an addict as much as you wish you weren't a parent of one.

I love you.

Sincerely, Your loved one battling addiction

(Author unknown)