

**Sunny
Side
Up**

Jessica



My father passed away in my early 20's and that's when I really leaned into Oxycontin.

When that became progressively more difficult to find, I transitioned to using dilaudid, and that's when I started using IV, and then very quickly heroin.

I definitely used when I was pregnant and that was really scary for me. There was the fear of DCF getting involved.

For some reason for the last month of my pregnancy, I was able to abstain long enough to give birth to my child and not have any involvement with DCF.

I went into labor in the evening, went to the hospital at 11pm, was in labor until 10am, and ended up having an emergency c-section. I was in shock and scared and didn't expect that.

He was sunny side up.

We were in the hospital for a couple of days and then we both went home together. Even though it was a traumatic birth, he was 7lbs. 12oz and healthy.

I was living with my sister at the time and I split my time between there and my baby's father. My mom and I have a good relationship and my sister was very supportive, but I was doing it alone. I was relatively sober for the first few months of his life. Once I started going back to work that's when I started using every day. I did a lot of running around with my kid in the car. I remember thinking, *"oh, he's young, he's not going to remember this stuff."*

But looking back on it, I can definitely see how he was more aware of it than I thought.

I was never approached by anyone or asked about my use; I very much kept that to myself. The people that I used with knew, but they were also mothers, so it didn't seem like that odd of a thing to be doing. It was pretty much accepted in my circle, whether you were pregnant or whether you had young children. I definitely kept it very quiet. I didn't want any involvement from DCF.

I was scared pretty much all of the time.

My family started to know I was using and there was a lot of encouragement to get some help.



The first time I went to treatment, my kid was 18 months old. There was a lot of residential and detox every 4 – 6 months for a few years. I would get clean and then come home with no support so within a couple of months, I would be using again. That went on for 4 years.

I'd had an accidental overdose and woke up in the hospital, and that is when I started thinking, "*I can't do the same thing to my kid that my dad did to me*". That's probably when I started seriously thinking, I was either going to commit to this lifestyle and screw everything else or I needed to focus on my sobriety.

The last time I went to treatment, I was able to take my time. I devoted 2 months to treatment and got into the clinic from there. That was really hard. I would take the train back every weekend to see my son. After treatment, I quit my work and I was couch locked for a good year.

I was afraid to do anything other than go to my meetings and appointments, and come home. I was petrified that I had fallen out quite a few times and I was really afraid that if it would happen again, and I was going to kill myself and not on purpose.

What worked for me was slowing down and going through all of the levels of care; detoxing, staying on campus, being in residential and really taking my time through the IOP program.

After I got out, having a counselor and actually following through with everything that was on my after-care plan. It also made a big difference that I had a really good relationship with my clinician at the Chittenden clinic. I felt really supported there.

I will be sober for 8 years this April.

Jessica