

THE LIFE
I NEVER THOUGHT
I COULD HAVE

Lindsay



I grew up in a very good home. My mom was a stay-at-home mom, and my dad is the local fire chief and owns his own business. They are both well known in the community and are good people. I grew up with two older sisters and a younger brother. I lived in a very good family. We never had money troubles, there was no trauma, and I had a very happy childhood.

In 8th grade, I was diagnosed with post-concussive syndrome. I had two concussions back-to-back. Within a month, I went from being a straight A student to failing all of my classes. I started to struggle with anxiety and depression for the first time in my life. I also started to hang out with the wrong people. I hung out with guys at the fair where I met my older son's father. I thought he was really cool, and I started spending more and more time at his house. His family had very different rules around drugs and alcohol. My parents were not comfortable with me hanging out there but they did not really have reason not to trust me. I started to be manipulative and would tell them, *"I've never given you a reason not to trust me."*

I ended up pregnant at 16 and dropped out of high school. I managed to stay sober through my pregnancy because my parents were adamant about having me living at home. They thought it was a safer environment. My parents were very concerned about me having a baby at such a young age and knew I would need a lot of help.

After my son was born, I was able to stay sober for 3 months while I was breastfeeding but soon after, I started asking them to babysit so I could go out and party. I started with opioid pills when my baby was 6 months old. I was hanging out again with my baby's father. It was a toxic relationship for me.

I got my wisdom teeth out at 17 and got a prescription for 40 Vicodin and that was it! I was addicted quickly. At one point, I was so out of it that I left my baby with my parents for what I thought was 4 days but was really a month. It was at that point that my parents told me that if I did not give them guardianship, they would involve DCF. I signed the paper because I knew I could not take care of him. My son was a year old when my parents took guardianship.

A couple of months later, I ended up in jail for robbery. I was in jail for 17 days and was given the option to go to Valley Vista Rehab. I was in rehab for 21 days and I was able to finish my high-school credits during this time and graduated from high school. At that point, I was 38 days sober. I relapsed the first day I was out which started a several years long journey of being in and out of rehab.

My parents at one point were willing to pay out of pocket for my boyfriend to go to rehab with me thinking it was the best way for me to get sober, but he wouldn't go. My dad really wanted me to end the relationship, but I couldn't. I was addicted to my boyfriend as much as I was to drugs.



I can remember after a 3-month stint of rehab and 5 months in a sober home, I threw it all away again. I was literally willing to do anything for drugs. At one point, I moved in with a very abusive 50-year-old man. It was another toxic relationship, but he would take care of me so I wouldn't get dope sick.

My addiction was so bad, and I was overdosing so often that I couldn't even function as an addict. I would go back to rehab for a few months and then as soon as I got out, I would relapse within a month. This went on for years. I was scared to be home. My parents would send me out of state because they knew I would run away from any program in Vermont.

On January 25th, 2017, I called my mother and said I cannot do this anymore. I didn't want my son to see me like that so I went to stay with a safe friend. I told him, "I need you to hold my phone so I don't call my drug dealer, and watch me so I don't leave". My friend lived with his parents and his mother was like, "*What is wrong with this girl?*" My face was scabbed over. My front tooth was cracked. She had known me before I was an addict, but I was unrecognizable. His mom wanted me to leave but my friend said, "*No. She needs to be here until her mom can come and get her.*" I will forever be grateful to him. I can't imagine how hard that was for him.

This time was different. I completely let go of all control and let other people make decisions for me. I was not able to make decisions for myself.

My dad didn't talk to me for the first 7 months of my recovery. It killed me. I just wanted him to say he was proud of me, but he was done. They had spent all of their retirement money on me, and my parents were fighting all the time. The tension I had caused in my family was so bad. My whole family was torn apart by me and my addiction. My whole family was sick because of me.

I knew I couldn't make a single decision for myself because if I did, I would have had a needle in my arm the next day. I told my mother, "Whatever you do, don't let me come home no matter how much I beg for that".

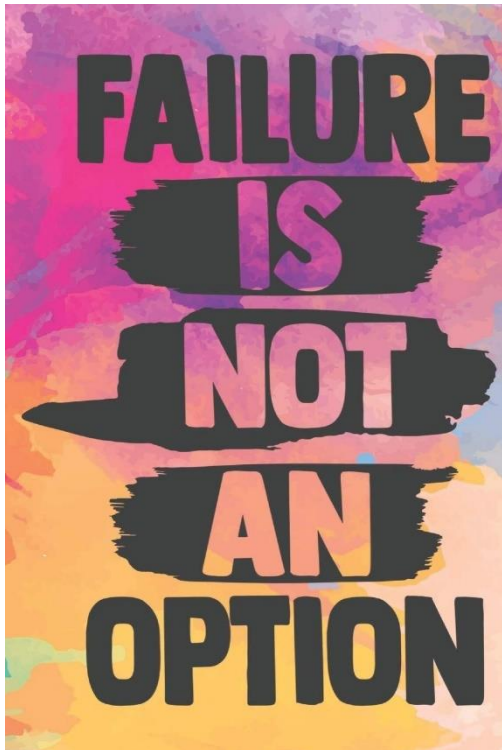
After I graduated from rehab, I went to a sober house for women that was amazing. They were so strict. Old Lindsay would have taken off but I had finally realized, "I've got to do this for me". I had gone to rehab all those other times for my son and the guilt I felt, but now I was doing this for me because I wanted a better life. I finally left the sober house and went home. I was helpless. I didn't know how to apply for job. I didn't know how to be an adult. I didn't know how to take care of my child. My mother had to help me with everything.

I finally got a job and met my new husband. When my new husband got a job offer in Indiana, my dad said, "You should go". If you stay here without him, you will go right back to where you



started. We moved to Indiana, and it was really hard. I was homesick and I wanted my son back now that I was clean. My parents knew that I wasn't ready. My husband didn't really know what to do with me. He had never been around addicts. Somehow, we made it through and 7 months later came back to Vermont. We lived with my family while we saved for a house. I got my son back. We got married, I had our second son and started a new life.

Now, I'm a stay-at-home mom and a life insurance agent. I know it sounds weird, but I can't express how good it feels to be the one that gets the school notices, makes the lunches and gets the phone calls from school when my son is sick or even when he acts up at recess. We are expecting our third son in June and I am having the life I never thought I could have.



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