

My worst fear in life is that my daughter will turn out like me.

I will never be able to say that I USED to be an alcoholic. I will forever be a recovering alcoholic.

I will never be able to take just one pill. I will forever be an addict.

I will never be able to say that suicide never seems like an alternative to life. I will forever harbor doubt of my existence.

“Act as if...” The movie Boiler Room uses these words as an adage by which one should perform their job. I used it, and to some extent continue to use it, as a way to live my life. Act as if I wasn't an alcoholic/addict.

I fooled everyone. My parents, my sisters, my friends. My bosses never realized that I came into work for more than four years straight intoxicated in some way. Gin and flavored vodka must have been invented by alcoholics. I couldn't fool myself though. And all the lying I did to myself never seemed to make a lick of difference. I didn't care. I didn't want help. I just knew that alcohol made all the crap go away. And when the crap came back, and I came to, I knew there was more alcohol to help me through another day.

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I can't think of a day when I was drinking or using that I didn't think of suicide. I always act so carefree and happy and as if nothing could ever get to me. There it is again: as if. It was all an act. Still is in many ways. I know that people have come to expect a certain personality when they interact with me and I am more than willing to give it to them because it keeps them around me. I like being the center of attention and surrounded by laughing and engaging people. Who doesn't? I know now, in sobriety, that these weren't real friends. They were just people as sad as I am. They were drowning their feelings of inadequacy in alcohol or trying to choke it with drugs. And damn it if it didn't work like a charm. You never think of yourself as an alcoholic or a dependent when you are surrounded by them. I'm just glad I see it now...before it was too late.

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I know that people see me and say that I have everything. A successful company, a beautiful daughter, and security in the fact that I have many true and loving friends surrounding me. I have these things and more. I still live in fear. I go to bed each night and wake each morning to the same fears. Alcoholism and depression are handed down. They are ingrained in the genes. I got it from my father. My daughter takes after me in every way. And that thought alone makes me think, sometimes, she would be better off if I wasn't around.

I am not a great father by any stretch. I have been an alcoholic since well before she was born and became worse when she arrived. I was overwhelmed and didn't know how else to cope. Besides that, everyone was buying me shots and beers to toast the new kid! I drank every single day of her life until I decided to become sober. From January 3, 2005 to July 22, 2007 I was drunk and/or high every day. I can honestly say that the well-being of my daughter (or her sisters, who were often in my sole care) came after my obsession with drink.

I will say it simply: I should have killed myself, my daughter and her sisters many times over. It is only by an act of God that we are all still alive today. I will never forgive myself for putting those beautiful girls in such danger. I never should be forgiven. There is no excuse or sound reasoning one can possibly come up with to justify it.

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I keep a cache of pictures on my computer from the last eight years or so. I look back at them and can see one common thread: I am holding alcohol in each and every one. In a few (more than I care to acknowledge) I have a glass in one hand and my daughter in the other. I will never allow myself to get over that. I refuse to put it behind me.

Then there is the video of my daughter and nephew playing at the zoo. I cry every time I watch it. My daughter is running around, acting like a spunky 2-year-old. Then she suddenly stops. Her smile goes away. And she points behind me and says "Daddy's!". She runs behind me and grabs the beer my sister was drinking. She assumed it was mine. I thought it was the funniest thing. That was the saddest part. And it wasn't the last time she would associate me and alcohol.

I quit drinking on July 22, 2007. On July 21, my daughter went to the kitchen to get juice for herself and brought me back a beer. She often saw me drinking. What finally made me realize how bad I had gotten was that it was only 6:15 in the morning. This is when she would usually wake up or get to my house (depending on the day) and I was just finishing up from the night before. In fact, I was still buzzing very hard when this occurred.

And I know that if I have just one beer – hell, one sip of beer – I'd go right back to that. I'd be even more of a failure at life and fatherhood as I already have been. I've cleaned up my act. I don't want to slip. But that is my fear.

My daughter may never use drugs or abuse alcohol. God willing she won't have the same feelings and thoughts I have. But if she ever does, I know it's because of me. It's my fault. And that would be the worst day of my life.

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I'm sober now.

Well, that's not true. I haven't drank in six+ months but I can go back at any time. That fact alone is enough to make you just say "screw it" and grab a bottle of Johnnie Walker. I shouldn't have had to chase sobriety. But I did. And am. And God help me.