

An experience that defiantly helped shape me into the person I am today is the nearly eight years I spent battling opiate addiction. After I graduated high school in June of 2012, I started going to bonfire parties and drinking, things I had never done prior to graduating, in November of 2012 I met my ex and started the downward spiral into addiction. First, we started smoking Percocet 30mg pills but, it was only about a year before the 30s were nearly impossible to find on the street and so a friend of ours told us that they were able to get a “pure form” of the Percocet 30s and we got that to smoke instead. It wasn’t until shortly afterwards when we would figure out that this “pure form” of the 30s was just regular heroin.

From that point on I really noticed the addiction begin to take hold and I spent the first five years of my addiction dating my ex, within those five years we lived in my car and even sold dope for a while to be able to support our own habits. After almost five years together we broke up towards the end of 2017 and I was able to still find ways to support my own habit. In 2018 I began seeing who my son’s biological dad would eventually be, before I even got pregnant, we were arguing one night and he ended up throwing a large, heavy A&W mug at me and the mug hit me directly in the mouth, knocking out one and a half of my top teeth and pushing my two bottom front teeth back. After this incident I still stayed with him and in January of 2019 I found out I was pregnant. When I was 19 weeks pregnant while in another argument, he wouldn’t let me into the car, so I grabbed the spoiler, he told me to let go and I said no. Knowing I was still holding the spoiler, and that I was pregnant, he still spooled the turbo and hit the anti-lag before taking off in the car, sending me flying off the back onto the street. Luckily, I somehow managed to twist in the air so the brunt of the impact was on my left upper thigh where I had bad road rash for a while, but my son was completely unharmed.

After he was born on September 3rd, 2019, I got clean and my clean date is September 11th, 2019, and I’ve been clean ever since. They say that to get and stay clean you must “do it for yourself” but, I never really cared about what happened to me however, I do care about what happens to my son. Ever since I was a little girl, I wanted my first born to be a boy but there’s so many girls in my family I didn’t think it would ever happen so, my son is literally my wish come true and I will do everything to make sure he has a good life and that his needs are always met. Since I started my battling with addiction shortly after I had graduated high school, I didn’t ever investigate higher education past my high school diploma.

However, after getting clean I knew I needed to have an education to be able to find a career that pays well enough to support myself and my son. I started taking general courses at Pierce Community College, working towards earning my associate of the arts degree since Pierce offers an AA-DTA (direct transfer agreement) I knew after earning my AA I would be able to use it to transfer to many local four-year universities. My dad has always said “find a job you love, and you’ll never work a day in your life” and so I thought about things that I enjoy and good paying careers, that’s how I ended up at sign language interpreting. My junior year of high school I took my first American Sign Language (ASL) class and instantly fell in love with it, ASL interpreters are something that sometimes are short in supply, it’s a career that not only pays well but is something I would enjoy. After earning my bachelor’s degree in ASL/English Interpreting from Western Oregon University I hope to find a regular job as a TTY operator, since they can usually work from home and that would be ideal so that I could be present for my son should he need me but still also be able to earn a living for the two of us at the same time.

While I'm by no means proud of the time I spent battling my addiction, I do feel that that time helped prepare me for practically any challenge I could face in a "normal" life and that that time also helped to humble me significantly. It's hard to describe exactly how but, before I began using, I was extremely naïve regarding "street smarts" I had all the book smarts in the world but, in that world book smart doesn't really help you to get anywhere. Sometimes I like to joke that the almost eight years I spent in active addiction was me attending and graduating from "street university", since I did learn a lot of things during that time that I never would be able to know any other way than having been apart of "the game" at some point.