

## Don't be Fooled

After my son Ian died in 1996, there was so much pain that I just wanted to run. And run I did. I've been a runner since I was in high school and 17 days after Ian died, I did a biathlon. It was only until this past summer that I stopped running. I don't mean races - I mean running.

It has been 10 years for me now and it still hurts so bad losing Ian. He was a great kid, but he made a bad decision to use drugs. All our kids are great kids. They have to make good decisions in their lives.

I remember when I was on the track team in high school, my big decision for the weekend was what I was going to wear at the dance and my concern was that my basketball team would not win. Kids nowadays really have the same situations, but now they are dealing with the temptations and pressures of using drugs.

My friend, who is the same age as I am, did drugs when she was a kid. She lost some friends along the way. She told me she became a mom late in life because it took her a little time to figure out things. One thing she said stood out in my mind: "When I saw my son behaving strangely, not being the person he usually was, I knew it was drugs."

She told me that after years of working on her early problem with addiction she was able to identify the problem with her child. She was lucky.

But research now shows many parents today who used drugs when they were young think it's okay for their kids to experiment. Well, I have dropped that word experiment from my vocabulary. Parents say, "Let Johnny experiment. I did and I am okay. These parents made it through. Be aware that every child will be asked to smoke, snort and perhaps shoot and are you prepared for that?"

The worst situation you can have is an unsuspecting child and a naive parent who doesn't think that drug addiction can happen to his or her child. Don't be fooled. Don't be naive. Don't sit back and say, "Well, Johnny is just experimenting. It is like playing Russian roulette. The purity of Drugs (with a capital "D") has drastically increased. Heroin was 7 percent pure several years ago. Today it is between 70 and 90 percent pure and it's everywhere.

The THC in Marijuana today can be as much as 29 percent. In the 1970s it was around 3 to 7 percent. Marijuana can be laced with heroin as well as cocaine, PCP and embalming fluid called "Wet." I found "Wet" in my son's drawer at college, along with steroids and pills after he died. Some kids don't get a second chance. Dealers know young kids won't shoot a needle so they make it easy. Heroin can be snorted or smoked. It has the Lion King or Spider man insignia on its packet. Kids think it's no big deal. They think it could be fun.

Parents, I care about you and your children. You don't want my pain. Find out everything your children are being exposed to, even if you think your child will never do drugs. Learn everything you need to protect your child. Remember, it's not a lecture. It is just a conversation and if your child is young, start talking now. If your child is using, it is okay to ask for help. You are not alone. I want to hear from you ... let's work together on this and help our children live healthy and safe lives.

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