

Drug Abuse Destroys Families

Together we had four children. Justin held a good position in a local financial institution. He was a wonderful father, always supportive of our children on their athletic teams, in their education, and helping around the house. Our life together was happy and hopeful. And then everything changed.

We had always known that Justin had ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). He was diagnosed in high school. A few years in to our marriage, we decided that Justin would go see his doctor to get help with his ADHD. His physician prescribed amphetamine salts to address this issue. I learned later that amphetamine salts were a very unusual choice of meds to treat ADHD, but we trusted the physician. Then Justin's job became very stressful. He began making poor decisions at work. The work stressors and the prescription drugs were a dangerous combination for Justin. Eventually, Justin resigned his position as bank administrator. His behavior at home became erratic. At first I thought Justin's mood swings were the signs of depression due to the loss of his job. But I soon discovered that Justin was misusing his prescription medications. I filed for legal separation.

We traveled to an athletic tournament in Chicago where our son's team was playing. When it came time to go to the game, we couldn't get Justin out of bed. He was too high to walk or function appropriately. My son was so disappointed. But for Justin, it was just another addicted day.

The last time my children visited with Justin at home, I discovered him in the bathroom crushing up his prescription meds and preparing to snort them. Another day, another devastating realization of what our lives, our marriage and family had become. Justin and I separated permanently.

I began to do some research. I contacted our insurance company and received a full printout of our recent medical expenses including our prescription medication orders. The printout of medications was pages and pages. I learned that Justin was visiting multiple doctors to get prescriptions to feed his drug habit. He was even getting prescriptions in our son's name.

Although we were separated, Justin began to terrorize our family. He stole my computer, hacked my cell phone, and accessed my calendars. He now knew where I was every day and followed me. I thought he was going to kill me. Justin hacked my son's phone and sent me hateful messages as if they were coming from my son. He called my workplace and impersonated my supervisor to reach me at my desk. And although it might seem like a little thing, Justin would often promise to attend our children's athletic contests. Because children always hope for the best, they would believe Justin when he would say he was coming to watch them play. But Justin never showed up or if he did, it was to terrorize me. Truthfully, I wasn't surprised when I learned that Justin had now switched from abusing prescription medications to using meth. The downward spiral continued.

Finally, Justin was arrested. He had started a business, misused the funds to buy meth, and ultimately had Federal charges filed against him for wire fraud. In addition to the wire fraud, Justin had cashed in \$50,000 in stocks from his retirement fund and \$50,000 in stocks from our joint investment account. He took \$6,000 out of our family's Health Savings Account and used it to buy more drugs. Desperate for more money to buy meth, he burned through our children's small savings accounts of Christmas and

birthday money. Justin even used our son's name to try to secure credit cards. It was agonizing to learn about addicts and the lengths they will go to get their next high. He destroyed our family finances and never looked back. The ramifications from Justin's addiction touched every part of our lives and will for years to come.

As told to Kelly Sickafouse
