

My name is Levi . In the fourteen years that I have been alive, I have seen enough to know exactly why drugs are bad. My story with drugs and alcohol started even before I was born.

My biological mother, Cindy, was exactly what you would think of when you thought of a drug addict. She came from a whole family of drug addicts and did whatever she could to get her fix. My brothers, Caleb and Dustin, were born into a hard life. At a very young age, they were forced to move from foster home to foster home, which, at least at the time, was hell for just about any child. Around their first grade, My aunt and uncle, who had three kids of their own named Karlee, Kayla and Robert, offered to take custody of them. They were given a good drug-free home of their own, but my brothers had trouble adapting, as they knew nothing of what it meant.

Due to neglect, Caleb exhibited symptoms that of a serial killer at a young age. He tortured small animals and was a very angry child. Dustin was luckily none the worse for wear, but he followed in Caleb's footsteps.

The pair ended up having to move back in with their mother a few years later after an incident with their cousin Robert. Here, they went through treatment no child should ever have to experience. Their mother was often using various drugs or drinking and forgot about her kids. She brought home strangers after selling her body on the street, or "boyfriends", as she called them. Sex offenders, other drug addicts. Not people who should be around children.

Eventually, she got charged with possession of narcotics and went to jail. Their aunt and uncle went through the process of getting legal guardianship for them. Now they no longer called them Uncle Brian and Aunt Tina. they called them Mom and Dad.

Years later, Cindy was out of jail and gave birth to me. A year later, Brian and Tina got custody of me before it was too late. They adopted me when I was 3 years old and never knew any different; this was my family.

Tina was Cindy's sister. Tina herself struggled with prescription drugs since she was a teenager. She never let this interfere with her parenting, and did her best, better than anyone I have ever known. This struggle has caught up with her a few times here and there, caught in a "dark room" as my sister would say, not wanting to go on anymore.

Years go by, and Mom and Dad separate a month before I turn eleven. It was for Before then, I had no idea what life was like outside a big happy family. Things only got worse since then, and I began to try to find myself. My brothers and sisters have grown up and moved on at this point, so it was just me between my mom and dad.

My mom had not worked in about 10 years then, so she did what she could to get by. In these stressful times she couldn't help herself but to turn to drugs. Her own nieces and sisters sold to her. This impacted just about everything for her. Her children cut her

out of their lives. She often slipped into depressive states but she still never gave up on me.

My dad did his best to help her out, but to no avail. This put a lot of stress on me and affected my living condition. A lot of times I ended up having to fend for myself.

A few years later she got a job and things started getting better. She had something to distract herself from drugs and she was happy. This didn't last long. She got fired and went into the most depressive state of her life. She ended up taking too many pills and faced the inevitable.

I am writing this essay with my mother's urn in the next room. Drugs ended up destroying her. This only brought on the worst pain me or any of her family has ever known. I have never in my life seen my dad cry until the day it happened. I am fourteen having to grieve over my mother's death. No one should ever have to do this over a something that only has power if you let it: Drugs. This is why I will say **NO** to drugs.

Loy