

Rx Awareness Real Stories

Sandra's Story



My brother's shoulder injury turned into opioid use disorder

My brother, Britton, started using as a teenager. It seemed casual and harmless at first, so I didn't worry. When he joined the military, we were all so proud of him.

My brother was prescribed opioids for a shoulder injury he got during his military service. I can't pinpoint the moment when his opioid use went from okay to not okay, but it all happened so fast. I know the transition from his military service to civilian life was tough. He had trouble maintaining jobs and lost the structured routine he had while he served our country. It took a toll on him emotionally, and his confidence waned.

He was also transitioning to a new life stage. He was newly married and just had his first child. We spent a lot of time together when I came home after graduating from college, and I could tell he felt the stress of being a new husband and father. His wife was also struggling with a substance use disorder, and he was the sole provider. I know he felt pressure to provide for his family. Britton and his wife's drug use became more chaotic, and there were several years when I distanced myself from him because I didn't know what else to do. It was a difficult and vulnerable time for our family. My mom and I leaned on each other a lot. We had so many aspirations for Britton, and we always stayed hopeful even though it was discouraging at times. I constantly wondered, "Will he be okay? Will he get better?"

Recovering alongside other veterans

Britton was referred to Veterans Treatment Court, a veterans-only courtroom that provides an alternative to incarceration, and this undoubtedly saved his life. He was able to recover alongside other veterans with similar experiences. It is incredible what he overcame in his recovery. He is now remarried, raising his children, has his own house, and so much more. I still can't believe the person he is today, how much has changed, and how much better he is now.

Some people wrongly assume that people with substance use disorders and their families are somehow flawed or bad people, but what we learned from our own experience is that this can happen to any family.

There is hope. Recovery is possible.

My advice to people who have a loved one who is struggling with addiction is to never lose hope. It isn't easy and wasn't for us, but recovery is possible. I am so proud of my brother and so grateful to have him back again.