

Abstinence Activity and Paper

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Abstinence Diary

06/20/2023

This is Day 1 of my experience in abstinence and the start of my abstinence journal. I have chosen to give up eating white flour, and foods that contain white flour. This includes bread, tortillas, especially tortillas, coating on chicken, gravy, pasta, and any other great-tasting foods involving the use of white flour. I did not have to sit down and think about what to give up; my decision to give up white flour is one that I made some time ago, but had not actually done. This project was a like a celestial sign to get to it. I am now a type 2 diabetic and my doctor informed me that the regular intake of white flour is not helpful to my condition. I know it will be difficult for me; flour tortillas are a staple in my diet, and giving up white flour, I feel, will give me a genuine experience in abstaining from a substance that is very attractive to me but is also harmful to me.

My plan entails several strategies. First, I will replace my use of tortillas, which is my biggest obstacle, with corn tortillas. I have never been a great fan of corn tortillas, but I intend to become one. I feel that I have such a habit in my use of tortillas that simply not having anything to replace flour tortillas would not work, I need an alternative. I purchased a tortilla press about two years ago when I was first considering this path, but it was still in the original packaging as I had never used it. I bought corn tortilla mix this week and made my first batch of corn tortillas this weekend; they were ugly but did not taste terrible.

Other changes I will have to make will come in the other ways I consume white flour. My sandwich order at Subway, restaurant pasta, biscuits at breakfast time, the use of rye in cooking, cakes, and cookies. The cakes and cookies are a worry, I bake every chance I get. I enjoy it and I do share my bakes with others, I always taste the batter. My plan for these things

is to order multigrain bread for sandwiches and avoid pasta, biscuits, and rye in my soups when I cook. For cakes and cookies, I will have to trust my recipes. I plan to journal regularly and honestly during this time to increase my attention to this endeavor.

06/21/2023

Oh, my goodness this is hard. I just started yesterday evening and I blew it yesterday evening. I had sourdough toast for dinner right after I started my documentation on the abstinence of white flour. This morning I blew it again, I had a breakfast burrito. I am feeling frustrated with myself and wondering if I will succeed through this commitment. I want to make a genuine commitment to this project, but I also want to succeed because I know it will be helpful to me personally.

I put the rest of the breakfast burritos and the sourdough bread I had in the freezer for others to have when they visit. I will have to plan ahead to not feel compelled to eat these items on impulse.

06/23/2023

Yesterday I did better. I did eat out for lunch, but I remembered to order whole-wheat bread for my sandwich. It wasn't the tastiest sandwich I've had, but it was ok. I think I will have to find ways to enjoy what I choose to eat more if I am going to be successful. I am also going to have to change my habit of eating out so frequently. I didn't realize how often I eat out. I had tapered it back, but I still eat out for lunch about 3 times per week. That is still too much.

06/24/2023

I had a completely white flour-free day today! I can't believe it; I feel like I'm starting to make progress. This first week has been rough, but I do feel like I've abstained from white flour for the most part. There were times when I had to mentally kick myself for preparing something that

included flour, but my determination is such at this time that I was able to give it away and not eat it. I'm fairly proud of myself, but I feel like this is not the hardest it will be.

06/26/2023

I have continued in my effort to abstain from eating white flour. I have eaten more salads. Not a bad move, I don't know why I don't eat them more often. I feel I am missing white flour most often at breakfast time. Some of the other things I have eaten more of are nuts. It is hardest at breakfast time, but I think I really need to plan better for lunch and dinner as well. I really don't think what I am doing now is going to support a white-flour-free diet.

06/27/2023

I made corn tortillas again today. I'm getting better at it. I then made chicken enchiladas for my dinner and took a picture of my meal and sent it to my daughter. She was impressed and asked that I make them when they come to visit in July. She is very encouraging, and I told her I was going to send her pictures of my food more often so that she can continue to encourage my efforts. It sounds childish to me, but I really feel more incentivized to cook healthier when she or my son encourage my efforts. I like hearing their positive comments. They make me feel good and, honestly speaking, proud of myself.

06/28/2023

Today we had a potluck picnic lunch at work consisting of a nacho and taco bar. I felt lucky that I wasn't tempted with anything flour. There were flour tortillas, but they didn't call my name. It wasn't unusual to not want the flour tortillas, I am kind of a snob about tortillas and prefer to eat homemade only. The ones they brought in looked like they were purchased at Walmart, yuk. I was very proud of myself until just this moment. I just remembered I had a brownie for dessert. I am certain that although the brownie was very chocolatey rich it was made with white flour. I

am exasperated with myself for not recognizing this until this moment. Ugggh! How could I miss that?

06/29/2023

My son called today and told me he is coming to visit over the weekend. I reminded him that I am not cooking anything with white flour. He said he was fine with that. He is very supportive of my efforts, but I know he won't remember so it will be up to me to make sure I remember.

07/01/2023

I was going to say that I have continued to abstain from white flour, but I would be lying. I RESTARTED to abstain from white flour on Thursday. At home, I have made sure to mark the things that I can't eat. I packed my lunch for Thursday and ate at home on Friday. I did well these two days. I need to make sure I notice the stuff that isn't obvious.

07/02/2023

My son has been here since yesterday. We ate out for breakfast and went to the movies in the evening. I avoided eating white flour all day; however, I ate some things I should not have. I had buttered popcorn and a soda at the movies. I was sitting here thinking about this and I feel that I gave myself permission to have these things because I have been doing better avoiding the white flour. It won't do me any good to avoid eating white flour if I am going to eat other things that are just as bad for me. Looks like I have to rethink this process a little bit.

07/03/2023

I did well again today. I am proud of myself and I tried to be more attentive to my diet overall. I feel I did better today, but I have to admit I was tempted several times. It was a hard day.

07/04/2023

I have been able to avoid white flour again today, but I was tempted strongly again today. My son and I went out for breakfast. I actually went through a whole conversation in my head about why I would be okay to order a blueberry muffin. I had it clear in my head that I was going to order a blueberry muffin with my breakfast at Perkins. I love their blueberry muffins. I had my order ready and when the waitress arrived and asked me my order I did NOT order the blueberry muffin. I remember watching the waitress walk away and telling myself, "Tell her you changed your mind, you have one more thing to order." BUT, I DIDN'T! It's funny to think back on that. Not funny ha-ha, funny like hmmm. I can't say that I feel proud of myself. I'm kind of feeling that hmmm feeling. It's hard to describe, I feel nothing and everything. I have thought about that muffin all day. Such craziness. It's just a muffin!

07/05/2023

I started this effort 15 days ago. I'm learning a lot about my eating habits. I eat out too much and I look for something else that is also not good for me when I can't have something with white flour in it.

07/07/2023

I am going to a family reunion this weekend. I am worried about eating the things I gave up for this project.

07/09/2023

Ugghh. I did not do well. I told my daughter I gave up flour for a class project so that I might experience, to an extent, what it is like to be addicted to a substance and then attempt to give it up. Yesterday at our family reunion I had two sopapillas for lunch. Not just one, two! Then for dinner, I had a hotdog in a bun. They all seemed extra delicious. I was irritated with myself.

Then today, when we were headed out of town to go home, we stopped at a Lotaburger. We don't have Lotaburger in Nebraska so when in New Mexico what do we all want? Lotaburger! The food is disgustingly delicious. I had a breakfast burrito. When I was telling my daughter what to get me, I said, "I already messed up yesterday, I might as well enjoy my breakfast today." My daughter commented back, "Wow, you ARE an addict." I got irritated at her comment, and I ate the burrito anyway but stayed away from white flour the rest of the day. Sitting here typing my notes for today, I can't help but feel shame over my reaction to my daughter's comment even though she didn't see my irritation, and for eating the burrito with the intention of not complying with my abstinence goal. My daughter is right, I am an addict.

07/11/2023

We have been home for a day and a half. I have continued to stay away from white flour, but I feel guilty for not being able to abstain over the weekend. I feel somewhat depressed over my behavior and lack of self-control.

07/12/2023

I weighed myself this morning and found I had lost about three pounds since I started this no-white-flour thing. I felt good about that, but I am still bothered that I keep failing at it. It doesn't happen every day or in major proportions as the ones I've noted, but it has happened. I am trying to become more educated on the replacements or what I can do to avoid white flour by simply learning what contains white flour. My daughter-in-law-to-be said that she is gluten-free and can share more about that with me. I did not realize that no white flour meant gluten-free. I feel kind of stupid for now knowing that, but also feel a glimmer of hope in learning that.

07/14/2023

Today is my granddaughter's birthday. Phoebe is one whole year old! I baked a cake, and we are having a party for her at my house. It will be rough.

Well, I would like to say that I did well at my granddaughter's party, but I had a couple of tortilla pinwheels and some cake. I feel like it sounds like an excuse, but I felt I had to eat because I made them. I didn't want people to think I didn't want to eat my own cooking. How do I fix that thought process to maintain my abstinence?

07/15/2023

Yesterday evening we went to the food fair after Phoebe's birthday party. I had nachos. I didn't continue my eating violations into the evening. I felt pretty good about that. Today, as a group, we went to the Flyover Brewery for lunch. My daughter asked me to share a pizza. I said okay then just as quickly remembered I could not and told her I would have a salad. She said okay and shared her pizza with her husband's brother. My daughter-in-law-to-be ordered an appetizer of cheese and crackers. I said that looked good and she said it was gluten-free. She allowed me to taste them, and they were very good. I keep forgetting to look for those options as well. For dinner today I had a banana and some nuts. I do not eat extremely well at times, and I need to work on that so that I am less tempted to eat things I should not. Everyone went to the concert tonight. I volunteered to stay with my granddaughter while they went. It was very nice to have her all to myself.

07/16/2023

My granddaughter was baptized today. For breakfast, I had eggs and whole wheat toast. For lunch, I had bratwurst, no bread, and some pasta salad, no pasta. It was hard picking out the few veggies in the pasta salad, but I got a few. After lunch when the cleanup was being done I

noticed that many people ate the pasta and left the vegetables. It made me think retrospectively that I was that person not too long ago. For dinner, I ate fruit and nuts again. I kind of like that, it fills me up, and no violations.

07/18/2023

I was just reviewing my notes and thinking about the last few weeks of my attempt to stop eating things made with white flour. At first, I felt that my notes are frivolous and don't really have anything to do with addictions, but as I thought about it more in-depth, I find that I really have an addiction to not just white flour but several foods in fact. And I am not making a lot of real progress in eliminating white flour from my diet. I have changed some things, but many things I've excused myself for "needing" to have or because the situation did not allow me to abstain. Actually, I take that back. I have not had flour tortillas except for the times I noted which add up to three total I believe. Considering that I was eating them daily prior to the start of this project, I think I have reached a milestone.

07/21/2023

I have been in Lincoln this week. Work and visiting my son. I caught a cold and have felt very gross all week. I have given little attention to my eating habits but find that being sick has enabled me to abstain from most of the foods that would be work for me in this project. I guess there is something good that came from this illness.

07/23/2023

I am still sick, but I do find that I spend a lot of time thinking about what I should or should not be eating. At this point, I am able to refrain from what was my usual routine most of the time. Usuals being flour tortillas and bread. I do feel that I have made some progress, but not enough

to consider myself successful in this endeavor. I think that if I had help or someone else going through this with me, I would be doing better. That sounds like another excuse.

07/26/2023

I was reading my assigned texts for class and many of the noted treatments seem to apply to my current attempt to change my eating behavior. I have been doing many things that I have done before when trying to change my eating behavior and keep wondering why I am not more successful. I am realizing that this is not something that I am going to be able to do on my own.

07/27/2023 I am still feeling sick. The antibiotics I got from the doctor make me feel nauseated all of the time. I went to the store with the intention to buy some sourdough bread, thinking it would calm my stomach. When I got there, I remembered this project. I bought some wheat bread instead. It's not as tasty, but I reminded myself to follow through with this project, it's almost over. I was thinking also that I am glad this is almost over, but in truth, this is something I need to continue to do. I am glad the project is almost over, and I don't think I did as well as I could have, but I did well in changing some eating habits so overall I am not disappointed in myself. I was going to compare it now to a harmful drug but felt that there was no way to match the distress someone addicted to alcohol or methamphetamines feels when trying to stop using and felt like it would be minimalizing how difficult addiction to drugs truly is. But then I thought that white flour is a harmful drug to someone with diabetes. It has been very difficult to change my habits and my wants and cravings, and this is just as harmful to me as an illegal drug may be to someone with a substance use concern. I had not thought about it that way before.

07/29/2023

I got up today and made myself some gluten-free pancakes. Not quite the same as real pancakes, but I'm learning to like them. They take maple syrup, of course, and that isn't good for me either, but when checking my blood sugar, I see that eating these doesn't raise my blood sugar as much as the real pancakes. I figure once in a while is ok. I'm going to try to make tortillas out of this gluten-free flour today. We will see how they turn out. I'm embarrassed to say that I am just doing this now.

What I have gathered from this endeavor is that I MUST continue to work on this project for the rest of my life. I cannot give it up just because I am not reporting on it to anyone. I think one thing I did learn clearly through this project is that I do feel better avoiding white flour. Even the mess-ups where I ate the delicious item anyway showed me that my body can't handle that stuff anymore. I feel bloated and uncomfortable when I eat white flour items. I also lost a total of 7 pounds, not a tremendous amount, but enough to tell me that I did better than I thought I did. I think this is going to be an ongoing struggle for me, but I am determined to continue, it isn't over.

Abstinence Paper

On June 20, 2023, I made the decision to abstain from eating food items made with white flour as the subject of my experience with abstinence for my class in *Psychopharmacology*, COUN 520. I decided on white flour because approximately 7 years ago I was diagnosed as prediabetic. My doctor recently told me that although my blood sugar levels have not gone up higher, the fact that they are maintained at the level they are means that I am a type 2 diabetic. I am not sure I see the logic in that, but I can't deny the fact that I don't feel well sometimes. White flour is something that has been a constant in my diet since I was a child and although I have tapered it down, I still eat tortillas and other things made with white flour daily. I know this is not good for me, and I have been thinking about how to change this for some time. I feel that this project was, in essence, a celestial sign for me to stop making excuses and address this concern.

I must admit I struggled through this project, and I learned some harsh but valuable lessons. It made me think deeply about the reason behind the assignment of abstinence for this class. My main takeaway about addiction is that giving up an addiction is on the addict. No one else will ever have the same investment in your success as you. Some may care and try to help, and others are addicted themselves. The ones that care about you and try to help are annoying sometimes, or they trigger your addiction because they don't know or understand your triggers. These ones can learn to help you if you take the time to teach them, but when you are missing your drug of choice, it is hard enough to deal with your own needs and triggers without having to teach someone else to do it as well. The ones that are addicted themselves are considerably more dangerous to be around because they don't care about your struggle, and they will tempt you with the point of your addiction the entire time you are in their presence. They might not offer

you the drug itself, but they might behave in a way, be around people, or go to a place that triggers your addiction. In the end, making the change from using to not using is going to be on the individual, regardless of what anyone else says or does. However, supportive words are much more encouraging to that person trying to fight their addiction than unkind or indifferent words. We can help the addicted person, and they can be made to feel that their struggle is not entirely a lone effort. For a counselor, it is important to keep in mind that our choice of words will be a powerful influence on the client. Words are the service we offer, and they are what promote the feeling of encouragement and support. “In the field of behavioral health, words are our primary tools. We don’t have hammers and saws, thermometers and stethoscopes, or brushes and palettes. Words are powerful tools and using them with intention is central to our craft.” (C. Cafaro, n.d.)

My plan of action for this project was simple, avoid the white flour, and replace what I couldn’t avoid. That was what I thought. After a few days with this plan, I realized it was a very poor plan and I needed to do more, I needed help. I enlisted my son and my daughter to check up on me and encourage me in the effort. When they did, I didn’t like their help and it made me angry to be reminded, but I never let them see my irritation. In retrospect, it was still not a great plan, but it was working better.

The level of abstinence I achieved was not disappointing to me. I did learn new ways of cooking some of the more difficult things I needed to give up. I now make corn tortillas often and enjoy eating them more than I thought I would. Avocado tostadas have become a regular meal item. They are quick and easy to make, and they taste very good. The good-tasting bit is very encouraging. I don’t feel like I’m missing out. I have also learned to simply eat without a tortilla for some meals such as breakfast. Using a fork works just as well as the spoon I was

accustomed to making with my tortilla. This is a habit I have had since childhood. Not having the tortillas readily available is helpful and reminds me that I have decided to use a fork for breakfast. It was weird at first, but not so much anymore. I think that was the biggest change I made; not eating flour tortillas. I did mess up several times, some I noted in the journal, but I lost seven pounds overall. I think this would denote that I was more successful than not.

Through it all I learned, more than anything, that I need to do this, I need to stop eating food items containing white flour. My intention moving forward is to continue to reduce my intake of white flour and continue to look for ways that will encourage and support me in this endeavor.

I was and continue to be critical of my mess-ups, but I am learning to weigh the options more closely to focus on avoiding the worst things to eat rather than all the things, but with a focus on reaching total abstinence at some point in the near future. For example, not eating flour tortillas anymore was a huge change and one that affected my daily diet greatly. I think this change alone contributed the most to my seven-pound weight loss. If I had chosen to only give up eating flour tortillas for this project, I would be counting myself hugely successful. I only messed up twice during this whole time. That was probably the most significant change, but giving up white flour as a whole did open my eyes to the availability of other options such as gluten-free eating and it made me pay more attention to the other things that I am using to replace these “bad” things in my diet.

I did lapse then I relapsed, several times. My relapses were unintentional at times and intentional at times. The only social consequences I experienced were a lack of sympathy from everyone. No one seemed to care enough to choose other options as well, not even for the short time they were in my presence. My daughter told me that I was an addict at one point, but she chose to go to that place with the burritos and everyone was getting a burrito. Lotaburger is the

devil's den when it comes to fast food you shouldn't eat in New Mexico. I suppose that probably applies to all fast food, but Lotaburger is really good.

Considering my struggles through this project, some of my lapses were oversights, I didn't realize I messed up until way after the fact. Some were more intentional. For the oversights, I told myself that I have to increase my awareness and I feel I was able to do that fairly well, but it is an ongoing endeavor. The intentional mess-ups were more difficult to contend with. I had whole conversations with myself about my decision to partake, making excuses and vowing to do better. I made the conscious decision to eat sopapillas, the hotdog in a bun, and said it was just because I was at my family reunion. Then the next day on our way out of town, Lotaburger! Argh! I told my daughter what to get me and she reminded me that a tortilla is holding it all together. I responded saying, "I know, I messed up yesterday so whatever." Her response to that was, "Wow, you ARE an addict." When she said that it made me angry. I thought to myself, "Oh shut up, it's not you not eating." Then I felt guilty, but I ate it anyway. When I was done, I was uncomfortable as I always get, and then told myself it was worth it. Even thinking about it right now I am making excuses, feeling that there was no way to avoid that great-tasting burrito that I can only have when I'm in New Mexico. I know I will have to put in extra effort to prepare for the temptations I face when I visit New Mexico or I am certain I will fail miserably again.

It wasn't until recent weeks, the last two in fact, that I felt more in tune with the importance of this endeavor and have decided to continue this effort forever, or at least until I reach the end of my current existence. My reaction to my relapses is that I have set a goal to focus on the heavy hitters in my diet first, I am continuing to work on no tortillas, not that I have returned to eating them, but I still want them every day. I am focused on finding a suitable

replacement, I am making gluten-free ones today and hope they work otherwise the search will have to continue. I also want to be conscious of all the other items in my diet that contain white flour with a long-term goal of total abstinence.

The DSM criteria for Alcohol-Related and other Substance Abuse-Related Disorders stand out in light of my experiences through this project. I do not intend to make light of alcohol or drug addiction by saying my eating habits brought out some similar tendencies as those identified in alcohol addiction, but they did and it appears to me that addiction is addiction, regardless of the focus. However, some things are more harmful to the human body than others are, but attempting to change addictive habits is difficult, to say the very least. Some similarities that I experienced with alcohol addiction are the following diagnostic criteria noted in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed., text rev.).

#4 Craving, or a strong desire or urge to use alcohol [white flour mainly tortillas].

#8 Recurrent alcohol [sopapillas, tortillas made with white flour] use in situations in which it is physically hazardous.

#9 Alcohol [white flour mainly tortillas] use is continued despite knowledge of having a persistent or recurrent physical or psychological problem that is likely to have been caused or exacerbated by alcohol [white flour mainly tortillas].

#11 b. Alcohol [white flour] or a closely related substance, such as a benzodiazepine [gluten-free flour, corn flour, whole wheat flour] is taken to relieve or avoid withdrawal symptoms. (APA, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, 2022, pp. 553-554).

If I evaluate my level of addiction by the severity/remission specifiers in the DSM I would have to diagnose myself as “F10.20 Moderate: presence of 4-5 symptoms.” (APA, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, 2022, pp. 554). I would not be able to count myself in remission because I

have only been truly abstinent for 2 weeks and even that is only for the most critical violators of my white flour diet, tortillas.

In comparison to other substance use disorders, I also feel I have experienced symptoms of difficulty concentrating, irritability, anger, and an increased appetite albeit in a milder fashion.

This exercise has updated my view on the role of interventions and treatment plans for clients with substance use concerns in that I feel that treatment help is extremely necessary for success at any level. I feel that the person saying they can go it alone or that they have the willpower to abstain on their own is fooling themselves. Drug use changes the brain's response to reward when drugs or alcohol are involved and even other aspects of the brain are affected. "Over time, brain regions responsible for judgment, decision-making, learning, and memory begin to physically change, making certain behaviors 'hard-wired.' In some brain regions, connections between neurons are pruned back, in others, neurons form more connections. Once these changes take place, drug-seeking behavior becomes driven by habit, almost reflex. The drug user becomes a drug addict." This is why recovery or rehabilitation is so difficult. Even after the person stops the drug use, it will take a long time for the brain to heal, sometimes even years, which "can make it challenging for addicts to stay drug-free." (Genetic Science Learning Center, 2013).

When I started this assignment, I didn't think it would be very difficult. However, it was, in fact, harder than I thought and reported. It was also very enlightening as to my need for change, and it gave me a great deal of insight into the array of feelings someone with addictions must go through. Additionally, I feel that regardless of the desire to change and the effort put forth to change. The temptation will always be there in various ways and many times in the ways that would appear the most innocent and unlikely because "relapse is a process and not a

single event. It is preceded by a series of subtle, often seemingly irrelevant choices known as ‘mini-decisions’ that individually do not portend a relapse but which collectively move the individual toward this step (Keller, 2003).” (H. Doweiko, 2019, p. 34-4). A person making such changes will have to be constantly alert to the possibility of a relapse.

I learned many things through this process. One main lesson is that I am addicted to more than one thing that is harmful to my body. I also learned that I would need help, professional help, to make necessary changes moving forward and stay abstinent. From a counselor's perspective, I feel I really gained a new perspective on the struggle someone may encounter when trying to stop misusing substances. I feel that my experience through this project of abstinence, although it was intense and revealing for me, is likely an understated version of what many others attempting to abstain from a drug or alcohol addiction experience.

I started out confidently, choosing a path that seemed the most attractive and simple to follow, but the plan laid out was haphazard at best, even though I thought it was a good one. I had thought that it can't be that hard, after all, I know myself, I can do this. Then with the first violation of this ill-laid plan the first feelings of failure set in with shock because the plan was good, how could this happen? I reevaluated and regrouped, still simply, and set out to abstain again. With every mess-up, learning more about how much of a hold this addiction has on me. Moreover, with every mess-up, I learned more and more about how weak willpower is in this body of mine, and how much weaker it gets with every temptation faced. Then one day, enlightenment, this is hard, and I need help. I became determined to succeed, but BAM! another relapse. Same thing over again, shame, questioning my ability to do this, and then starting again from the beginning. I got going again and then BAM! Again! This time though, I don't see

failure in the relapse, but a lesson. I need help, I can't do this on my own and more importantly, this is not a simple battle, this is a war, and I will be fighting it for the rest of my life.

This process was not easy. I experienced a multitude of emotions and felt like giving up several times. I feel that overall, my own knowledge and experience helped me stay focused on improving, which is all I had left, I certainly was not succeeding in a manner I would consider a success story, but I could improve. I am glad I participated in this experience and feel strongly that it will help me be more understanding of those who struggle with substance misuse.

In closing, I would like to share my personal experience with addiction. Approximately 20 years ago, I went to my younger brother's home to talk to him about what I felt he was intentionally doing to himself. His wife had left him, his child went with her, and his home was close to foreclosure. I walked into his house and saw little plastic baggies strewn around and spoons with burnt drug residue laying on the countertop. I could not believe how far he had fallen. I asked him to just stop using and asked him to get help and find treatment. He said he couldn't stop because he wasn't strong like me. He thought I was strong because I did not have an alcohol or drug addiction. This project has shown me that it wasn't strength that kept me from becoming addicted to drugs or alcohol, I was simply fortunate enough to have not had the same experiences that he did. That old saying, "There by the grace of God go I" comes to mind.

The struggle of addiction is different for everyone, but it is a struggle, nonetheless. My brother died a year ago in January. Too young and too soon. I was not able to help him. I don't necessarily feel guilt over my inability to help I was not equipped to do so, but I do feel a great deal of sadness. He was a genuinely good person and was always willing to help another, even when he was going through struggles of his own. I hope I have the strength he saw in me to be

genuine and real and helpful to someone else that might be feeling the things he felt when he felt too helpless and too weak to stop using.

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