

STONEWATER®

ADOLESCENT RECOVERY CENTER

Dear Parent,

I am writing this letter hoping it will help those of you who are navigating the reality of a son or daughter who is struggling. When this happened to our family, we did not see it coming. My son had two older sisters, neither of whom struggled in the way he was struggling, so we were lost in what we needed to do.

To this day I become emotional when I consider my delay in responding adequately to the numerous red flags indicating something was wrong with our son Bryan. I chose over and over to minimize the signs and rationalize his behaviors. I wanted desperately to believe all the improbable explanations he gave me. I chose to ignore other things as well - the steady decline of his physical appearance; his academic performance; his athletic performance; and the steadily increasing amount of time isolated from his family, even from many of the close friends he had grown up with. All of these events were happening gradually over months and years. But I continued to procrastinate - unwilling to accept that these were not things we could address in the home.

I knew something was wrong but I kept holding on to the idea he was going to somehow work it out on his own and turn things around. My indecision to some degree was influenced by my own experiences as a teenager. Drugs and alcohol had been a part of my life that I eventually grew out of, but what we were experiencing with Bryan did not match my own experiences as an adolescent or young adult. All the time we didn't get him help, things were getting worse and the risks were becoming greater for him.

The atmosphere in our home became increasingly characterized by drama. I was traveling for work frequently during that time, so my wife had to bear more of this burden than I did. One day, out of the blue, Bryan came forward and admitted he needed help. Even though we did not have financial resources to pay for treatment, we resolved to do whatever it would take, no matter the sacrifice, to get him the care he needed. Although it took time for me to get there, I was finally, absolutely convinced that his life hung in the balance. That belief changed our approach to all future decisions as we moved forward in getting him the help he needed, which was the best decision we ever made for Bryan and for our family.

My encouragement to you as a parent or guardian is to not hesitate and to instead approach your deliberations with a sense of urgency. It's ok if you don't have all the answers and can't do it on your own. Making the decision to trust the people who can will be the best decision you ever make.



Jeff Fikes



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Dear Parent,

I can't express the emotions I felt when I saw all my dreams for our son slowly fade. The lifestyle that was consuming him broke my heart. I knew he needed treatment but my husband just couldn't get on board with it at first. The financial concern was a big issue for him - we had insurance but it did not cover any residential treatment services. However, I knew we had to figure out a way because our son needed help that we didn't know how to give him. I had so many concerns about sending him to residential treatment: He and I were very close and I worried he would resent me for sending him away. I was concerned about what my friends and community would think of us as parents. I worried that they would judge our son. Ultimately I realized that these things were immaterial when compared to Bryan's life and decided this was a chance we had to take. Thankfully, my husband finally agreed and it was the best decision we ever made. I honestly believe our son would not be alive today if we had not taken that very difficult step toward getting him help. It not only rescued our son but made our entire family stronger.

Now our son has lived a full life in recovery for over 20 years. He has a beautiful wife and precious children that we get to love and spend wonderful time with as a family. He has achieved dreams far beyond what we ever even had for him. Faith was important to our family, and I can't leave out all the time spent in prayer during that season. It strengthened our faith and got us through the toughest time we have ever experienced as a family.

Now I've learned that mental health and substance use disorders are critical issues parents are not trained to treat and should take very seriously. The issues do not heal with time. As a parent, we would tell other parents that, you know when your child is struggling and you should never be afraid to do whatever it takes to save their life.

Margaret

Margaret Fikes

