

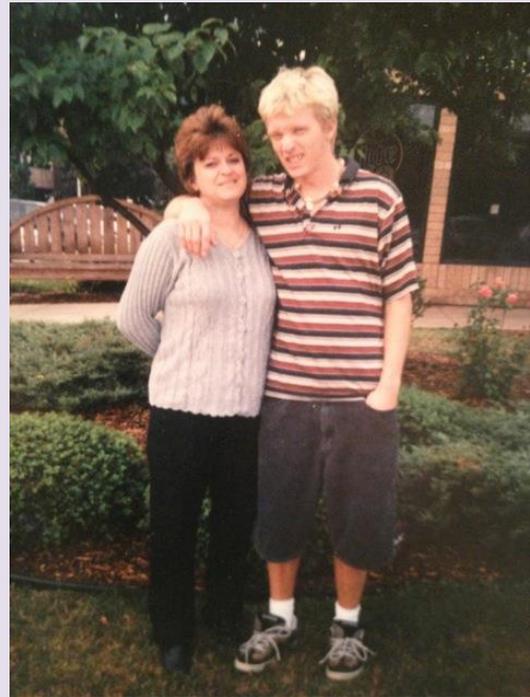
By Linda Lewis

My son David was 23 years old when I lost him.

David got involved with drugs at an early age - 18 yrs. old is the first I realized it after he came home from visiting his dad. He was always a troubled child. I had to divorce his abusive father when the boys were preteens.

The years that followed until the time of David's death were filled with anger, hurt, hope, lies, abandonment, disappointments, betrayal, love and every other emotion possible. After struggling in school, David made the principals honor roll list in 8th grade. I was so proud of him. When he entered high school, he got involved with a young girl and trouble started again. He would run away at night and I would search for him. This went on for many months. Either I or the police would find him and his friends didn't like that and actually threatened my life.

David was willing to get back on track. He agreed to go to Project Challenge, a military school for troubled teens. He graduated from their program and got a job but started hanging out with another worker who smoked pot.



I worked two jobs to support my family and one night, a co-worker said to me, "Linda, if you love your son David like I believe you do, go through his room with a fine tooth comb..." At this time, David had just turned 18 years old.

I went through his room. It was heartbreaking to find marijuana and a pipe to smoke it in. Since I had always told my boys that I would not tolerate any type of illegal drugs in my home, I spent a very restless & sleepless night trying to figure out what to do. I loved my son but had him arrested the next morning and went down to the courthouse to get a restraining order so he could not come home and do drugs. I did keep the lines of communication open. He could call me anytime.

Over the years until his death, we would talk now and then. One time, when I was out of town, his brother Jeff allowed David to come home when he discovered that David was living on the street and near death. David then decided to follow his brother Jeff *by* joining the Navy and worked on getting clean. But a drug test detected marijuana in David's system and prevented that from happening. David said, "Mom, I am so disappointed. For the first time in my life I feel as if I was worth something".

We had frank talks. David told me of his lifelong emotional roller coaster with different drugs and alcohol. Marijuana was his drug of choice - he liked how he felt after smoking a joint. He told me that I was the best mom that anyone could ever have. When I thought of all the things that I had done to him, I couldn't understand how he could say that. David then told me "Mom, you weren't tough enough on me."

I remember driving David around for job interviews because he didn't want a driver's license. He had 5 job offers within 3 hours but when I visited where he was staying with friends, I saw no less than 10 bongos sitting on the tables. At that point I knew I was done. For the first time in over 10+ years, I prayed to God..... "Father, I am done - I cannot do this anymore. I am handing David back to you - please take care of him for me".

1 1/2 weeks later on a Thursday night, David called and asked if I could pick up his taxes. He was very adamant about it. I drove to his house. He picked me up, threw me over his shoulders and twirled me around, kissed me on both cheeks and said "Mom - you are the best mom in the world that anyone could ever have - I love you". Those were the last words he ever said to me.

Saturday morning at 4:00 am, there was a bolt of lightning and a crack of thunder - I woke up and thought of David just briefly and then went back to sleep. That night one of David's friends called me. He said "There was an accident... something happened to David and he isn't coming back". David was killed a little after 4:00 that morning due to a tragic accident out in the desert after a night of partying with his friends. David death wasn't due to drugs that night. He was innocent only to the point of being a passenger in a vehicle driven by a friend that was drunk and high on marijuana and lost control of his vehicle.

Peer pressure is bad enough when our children's friends are in to drugs but society is much more permissive today making a parents' job tougher than ever. Think about who our children idolize?

We must do everything we can to keep our children safe. We must know who their friends are and who their parents are. Today, more services are available like DrugFreeAZKids.org to help us educate ourselves. While we don't have control over everything, we can learn as much as we can to help prevent our kids from ever trying drugs.

We don't want to have to ask ourselves, "Where did I go wrong?" at a later time.

David will forever be 23..... RIP, honey, I think of you daily and I miss you. I will always love you.