May 2016

The Road to Recovery

Blake Lanser

Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos

Recommended Citation

Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos/vol2016/iss4/12

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ethos by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
It's not easy deciding what we want to be when we grow up. We are surrounded with community members and close family that are always poking at prodding at what we want to spend the rest of our lives doing. As if that question isn't hard enough to answer, take these factors into consideration: a child of your own, drug and alcohol dependencies and other personal issues that set you back.

For ISU junior Lindsay Fitzgerald, moving through her college journey has had its roadblocks.

Fitzgerald, born and raised in Boone, Iowa, seemed to hit a twist in her life when she was a sophomore in high school. "My freshman year of high school was just a blast. But, you know, for me it became more and more of a daily thing that I couldn't keep up with. " Fitzgerald said. During her high school career, Fitzgerald was a heavy user of methamphetamine, marijuana and alcohol.

When her college career began inching closer and closer, Fitzgerald realized that she didn't have the necessary skills to make her life turn out like her dream life. "I always pictured myself going to college, having a family, a nice home, good job, etc" said Fitzgerald. She enrolled at Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) and only made it through one semester. "I did one semester at DMACC and the following semester failed out for not attending because I couldn't stay sober. I always intended to go back but applying the necessary action to make my intentions come true was where I had trouble. " Fitzgerald was not able to go back to school while she was still using drugs and drinking.

"Alcohol and drugs were my solution to dealing with everything that I didn't know how to deal with. " It wasn't until she turned 20 that she realized she needed a change in her daily routine.

"I became pregnant before I had my son [Charlie]. I ended up miscarrying. After I miscarried, I picked up where I left off with the using [marijuana and drinking]. " Six months later, Fitzgerald became pregnant again and ran into a personal battle of continuing to drink or white-knuckle her habits.

"I was pacing back and forth and thinking out loud that I knew I was pregnant. At that time, I was not willing to admit it to myself, " Fitzgerald said. For about a month, Fitzgerald continued to drink and smoke marijuana despite having the thought that she was pregnant.

"I don't really know exactly, but some people knew. Then came my 21st birthday and I was about a month pregnant and I didn't tell a lot of people. I celebrated like people would have had they not been pregnant. " During her pregnancy, Fitzgerald struggled with her drug addictions and continued drinking habits. "I didn't know what I was going to do and I knew I had to quit smoking pot. I thought, I just can't, " Lindsay said. It wasn't until December 25th, 2010, Fitzgerald's official sobriety date, that she quit using drugs and drinking. Out of the nine months of her pregnancy, only five of them were spent sober. "Looking back I am not proud at all of behavior of drinking and using drugs while I was pregnant" said Fitzgerald. She says that sharing this part of her story is not to glorify her actions, but to show where her addiction had taken her. Fitzgerald says that she is thankful that Charlie came out perfectly healthy and has never had to see her drink and be on drugs. During those five months of sobriety, Fitzgerald found hope in the programs in her home town.

"I had just turned 21 and that's when I started to find a little bit of hope and I hung on. I didn't plan on staying sober forever, but it just worked out that way. I felt a lot better, " Lindsay said. Her substitution for drinking and using drugs was the a 12-Step program through Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), which showed her how to deal with things without having to turn to drugs and alcohol. According to the official AA website, the program is a fellowship of men and women...
THE ROAD TO RECOVERY
One student’s journey through addictions and being a single parent
STORY AND PHOTO BY BLAKE LANSER  DESIGN ALIXANDRIA COLLINS

It’s not easy deciding what we want to be when we grow up. We are surrounded with community members and close family that are always poking at prodding at what we want to spend the rest of our lives doing. As if that question isn’t hard enough to answer, take these factors into consideration: a child of your own, drug and alcohol dependencies and other personal issues that set you back. For ISU junior Lindsay Fitzgerald, moving through her college journey has had its roadblocks.

Fitzgerald, born and raised in Boone, Iowa, seemed to hit a twist in her life when she was a sophomore in high school. “My freshman year of high school was just a blast. But, you know, for me it became more and more of a daily thing that I couldn’t keep up with.” Fitzgerald said. During her high school career, Fitzgerald was a heavy user of methamphetamine, marijuana and alcohol. When her college career began inching closer and closer, Fitzgerald realized that she didn’t have the necessary skills to make her life turn out like her dream life. “I always pictured myself going to college, having a family, a nice home, good job, etc” said Fitzgerald. She enrolled at Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) and only made it through one semester. “I did one semester at DMACC and the following semester failed out for not attending because I couldn’t stay sober. I always intended to go back but applying the necessary action to make my intentions come true was where I had trouble.” Fitzgerald was not able to go back to school while she was still using drugs and drinking.

“Alcohol and drugs were my solution to dealing with everything that I didn’t know how to deal with.” It wasn’t until she turned 20 that she realized she needed a change in her daily routine.

“I became pregnant before I had my son [Charlie]. I ended up miscarrying. After I miscarried, I picked up where I left off with the using [marijuana and drinking].” Six months later, Fitzgerald became pregnant again and ran into a personal battle of continuing to drink or white-knuckle her habits.

“I was pacing back and forth and thinking out loud that I knew I was pregnant. At that time, I was not willing to admit it to myself,” Fitzgerald said. For about a month, Fitzgerald continued to drink and smoke marijuana despite having the thought that she was pregnant.

“I don’t really know exactly, but some people knew. Then came my 21st birthday and I was about a month pregnant and I didn’t tell a lot of people. I celebrated like people would have had they not been pregnant.”

During her pregnancy, Fitzgerald struggled with her drug addictions and continued drinking habits. “I didn’t know what I was going to do and I knew I had to quit smoking pot. I thought, I just can’t,” Lindsay said.

It wasn’t until December 25th, 2010, Fitzgerald’s official sobriety date, that she quit using drugs and drinking. Out of the nine months of her pregnancy, only five of them were spent sober. “Looking back I am not proud at all of behavior of drinking and using drugs while I was pregnant” said Fitzgerald. She says that sharing this part of her story is not to glorify her actions, but to show where her addiction had taken her. Fitzgerald says that she is thankful that Charlie came out perfectly healthy and has never had to see her drink and be on drugs. During those five months of sobriety, Fitzgerald found hope in the programs in her home town.

“I had just turned 21 and that’s when I started to find a little bit of hope and I hung on. I didn’t plan on staying sober forever, but it just worked out that way. I felt a lot better,” Lindsay said. Her substitution for drinking and using drugs was the a 12-Step program through Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), which showed her how to deal with things without having to turn to drugs and alcohol.

According to the official AA website, the program is a fellowship of men and women
who have had a drinking problem. The program structures itself with 12 steps and 12 traditions that keep the group alive and help to better its members. With the 12 Step program before her, she had to work on each step and do so with her sponsor.

While working the 12 steps of AA, Lindsay was flying solo with her son, except for her mother’s support. Lindsay met her son’s father during her sophomore year of high school. At the time, Lindsay had just begun using [marijuana and methamphetamine]. “My friends were no longer hanging out with me on a daily basis, and he was just there. It was the attention, and I basically moved right in,” Lindsay said.

During her use of drugs and alcohol, Lindsay kept a diary where she journaled of her newfound spiritual life, Lindsay says. On top of the sobriety that she gained from AA and NA, Fitzgerald was able to re-enroll in school through DMACC. “I learned how to regain some stability. I started by staying sober and holding a job down. I paid what I owed DMACC from the wreckage of my addiction off, $25 at a time” says Fitzgerald.

Through her experiences growing up with her son Charlie, Lindsay has been saved with the support of her friends at AA and NA and her new found spiritual life. “I have recently expanded on my spiritual life which really keeps me grounded,” says Lindsay. On top of her newfound spiritual life, Lindsay says that the friends she has discovered through

As far as receiving support from Charlie’s father, Lindsay says that he’s present as needed. “He’s not always reliable, but if I need him to watch Charlie for some reason he does.” Lindsay says that when Charlie is with his father, he receives lots of gift and attention, which Charlie loves. But the consistency of when Charlie sees his father is not always there. “Sometimes it will go once a week where he’ll be able to see him and other times it goes a month, maybe — it’s very sporadic” Lindsay says.

Through her experiences in AA and its sister program, Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Lindsay has been sober for over five years and has no plans on letting that time go to waste. “I had been hitting a lot of meetings and I had a sponsor,” Fitzgerald said. Her continued utilization of meetings in her hometown of Boone aided in extending her sobriety.

“I was very panicky as a first-time parent, but I just kept trying to do the next right thing and get through this. Because I had an addiction didn’t mean I didn’t care about kids, because I really did. I loved other people’s kids and I thought I knew what was right. I just took it one thing at a time and did what was right in front of me. ”

“I made the biggest progress during Step Nine where I started making amends to people. That is where I became free from my addiction and really able to look at people in their eyes,” said Lindsay. Step Nine of AA is making direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. During this step, it is up to the alcoholic who struggles to work with others around them whom they have harmed in any manner.

On top of the sobriety that she gained from AA and NA, Fitzgerald was able to re-enroll in school through DMACC. “I learned how to regain some stability. I started by staying sober and holding a job down. I paid what I owed DMACC from the wreckage of my addiction off, $25 at a time” says Fitzgerald. Through AA and NA, Fitzgerald had a solid foundation of how to deal with problems in her life, which now included balancing her ongoing education through Iowa State.

“AA definitely helped me stay in school. It helps me live my life on a day to day basis. I didn’t know how to do adult things, but through staying sober via the 12 steps and having relationships [with people] who gave me their experience, strength, and hope, I have been able to maintain going to school,” Fitzgerald said.

Through her experiences growing up with her son Charlie, Lindsay has been saved with the support of her friends at AA and NA and her new found spiritual life. “I have recently expanded on my spiritual life which really keeps me grounded,” says Lindsay. On top of her newfound spiritual life, Lindsay says that the friends she has discovered through
“AA definitely helped me stay in school. It helps me live my life on a day to day basis.”

AA and NA now feed her social life and serve as some of her best girlfriends. Lindsay has also started going to counseling to help with some of the newer found problems in her life.

When asked what advice she would give to those struggling with drug and alcohol dependencies, Lindsay said that AA and NA are a great step in the right direction. “I’m a strong pusher for AA and NA, but I try to just lead by example. You can’t just force that down someone’s throat. But if they are willing, I try to get them to a meeting and there you see that you have to stick with the people that are actually getting it,” Lindsay says.

On top of AA and NA, Lindsay says that some individuals need to seek out treatment. “Sometimes people need treatment, but I see a lot that people go to treatment and they think that is all they need. That wasn’t my story. I’ve been to two in-patient treatments and I thought that was it, but that was not it. It’s a continuous thing, building a new life through AA.”

AA and NA are great resources and have helped many alcoholics and drug users turn their lives around. For Lindsay, they were her door to a new life, a life through AA. “There are resources and you just have to find them out,” says Lindsay.

While Fitzgerald found the spirituality based steps helpful in achieving sobriety, according to the AA website, “newcomers are not asked to accept or follow these Twelve Steps in their entirety if they feel unwilling or unable to do so.” They are based on the experiences of the earliest members of the group.

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.