**Facing My Demons: Battling a Lifetime of Alcohol Addiction**

 **in My Late 40’s**

Alcohol had been my constant companion for most my life. From the carefree, hard-partying days of my twenties to the relentless necessity of drinking just to function, it was the one thing I could always turn to-until it turned against me. By my late 40’s, I realized how deeply it had burrowed into every aspect of my existence, poisoning my relationship, my education, and most devastatingly, my marriage.

This is my story of how I nearly lost everything and the painful journey of slowly piecing my life back together.

**A Lifetime of Denial**

In my twenties, alcohol was fun, a symbol of freedom and rebellion. It was there for every celebration, every heartbreak, every late-night conversation. But what started as a social habit slowly became a dependency. By my thirties I couldn’t imagine a day without it.

By my forties, drinking was no longer about fun. It was about survival. The days began with a drink to steady my hands and silence the shame, then another to ease the creeping anxiety, and then more just to numb the memories and pain. I was drinking from the moment I woke up to the time I closed my eyes at night.

To most people, I seemed fine. I worked hard to maintain appearances. But those closest to me-my husband, my family-began to see the cracks. My husband later told me, “By 3 o’clock, you were a different person, one who seemed to hate me.” That’s when the real damage would begin.

**A Marriage on the Brink**

Alcohol made me reckless, restless, and selfish. My husband, an amazing man who supports me through every phase of my life, was growing increasingly frustrated and hurt. While he begged me to face my problems, I looked for escape.

I found that escape in the form of a younger man who, ironically, didn’t drink at all. It wasn’t love, it was an attempt to feel alive and young again, to run from the reality of what I had become. But it was a betrayal that cut my husband deeply, and it almost destroyed us.

I thought I was hiding things from him, but he saw it all: all the lies, the distance, the way I’d disappear at the first opportunity. He told me, “You’re destroying everything, most of all yourself.” He was right, but I wasn’t ready to hear it.

**Education in Jeopardy**

In the chaos of my addiction, I also jeopardized my education. Returning to school later in life was supposed to be my fresh start, my way of proving to myself that I could still achieve something meaningful. Instead, I found myself skipping assignments, missing deadlines, and being unprepared.

The stress of juggling school and my addiction only drove me deeper into the bottle. It became a vicious cycle: drink to cope, fail to deliver, drink to numb my shame.

**The Breaking Point**

It wasn’t a dramatic event that made me seek help again-it was a quiet moment of reckoning. I looked in the mirror one morning and didn’t recognize or like the person staring back. My skin was pale, my eyes hallow. I saw the pain I had caused etched into every line on my husband’s face. I saw the distance in my family’s reactions, the silence from friends who had stopped reaching out.

I realized that alcohol hadn’t just destroyed my health; it had turned me into someone I didn’t want to be.

**The Pain of Detox**

Getting help was not easy. Detox was brutal-physically and emotionally. The withdrawal symptoms were agonizing, but worse was the clarity that came with sobriety. For the first time in years, I had to face everything I had been running from: the pain I caused my husband, the trust I shattered, the dreams I nearly destroyed.

But it was also a turning point. That pain became my motivation to change.

**The Road to Recovery**

Recovery is not a straight path. It’s a series of small, daily choices: to stay sober, to be honest, to take responsibility. I began rebuilding my relationships, starting with my husband.

It hasn’t been that long nor has it been that easy. Trust takes time to rebuild, and forgiveness is not automatic. My husband has stood by me, but I need to prove my commitment-not just to him but to myself.

With my family, I’ll have to own up to the years of hurt and neglect. With my friends, I’ll have to rebuild connections that alcohol didn’t sever. And with my education, I’ve recommitted to the goals I nearly threw away.

**Lessons Learned**

In my late 40’s, I’m learning to live without alcohol for the first time in decades. It’s terrifying, but it’s also liberating. I’m finally confronting the pain I tried to drown, and in doing so, I’m finding the strength to heal.

Addiction doesn’t just have the addict-it ripples out, touching everyone in their life. I’ve left a trail of broken pieces behind me, but I’m working every day to pick them up and make amends.

For anyone struggling with addiction: it’s never too late to start over. The road to recovery is painful, but it’s also a journey toward hope, healing, and rediscovery.

I’m still on that road, but for the first time in years. I’m walking it with purpose. And for that, I’m grateful.

 Written by Melinda Miller

 12/17/24