

I have a wonderful daughter. She is 26 years old and lives right next to me in Voluntown. My daughter was a straight A student in public school, and in the time that she was able to attend college she achieved a 4.0 GPA. She was named the Student of the Year at the end of her freshman year in college. She was also chosen to represent Three Rivers Community College at a seminar in Texas where she spoke to hundreds of people about a published essay she had written. As a parent I am very proud of my daughter. She wants to do great things in her life; before she became ill she wanted to be an infectious disease biologist for the World Health Organization. But, then she developed Crohn's disease, and her life, her son's life, and her dreams were overshadowed by the enveloping pain she was forced to live with every hour of every day.

Imagine watching your child curled up in a fetal position on their bed, crying and crying because they were in so much pain - day after day after day. I don't know how many times she went to the emergency room because she thought she would die from the pain. I don't know how many nights she lay with her head in my lap while writhing in pain. I don't know how many times I have prayed to God to take this pain from my daughter, but the pain continued. Finally she went to a pain management clinic and they recommended a specific course of medication to help her cope with her disability.

At first she seemed much better - she was able to get up and take a shower, get dressed, and play with her son. Unfortunately, as time went on, the medication could not rid her of endless pain, and more was prescribed.

Slowly at first, and then more rapidly, I saw my daughter start to slip away. She was always angry and suspicious of her family and friends. She started to distance herself from family gatherings due to her increasing pain and side effects from the Crohn's disease. Her Crohn's flair-ups would once again leave her curled up in her bed in a dark room, crying, sometimes for weeks at a time.

I have never experienced the pain that I saw on my daughter's face at those times. I did not understand the reason for her suspicions that I hated her and wanted to hurt her. I didn't understand why she only wanted to sleep and be alone. Her son was the only thing that kept her grounded to life. I truly believe that without the love they shared she would not be here today.

My daughter was slipping into a pit of darkness. She would go weeks without taking a shower, eat sporadically, and never want me to see her.

Then, on a Friday afternoon she called me up, hysterical that the doctor's office had already closed for the weekend and she had no more pain medication. This meant that she would have to go three days without any relief from her agony. I don't know what happened, but something broke, or clicked, or a bell rang, but that was the last straw. She decided no more drugs - she hated herself and needed to start to feel alive again.

What ensued were weeks of withdrawal and it was very scary. She talked about crazy things and how people were after her. My ex-husband had abused drugs, but I never watched him go through withdrawal, so this was new to me. She seemed like she was losing her mind, and I was sure I had lost her for good.

But, then something changed; she wasn't talking about being in so much pain and I started to see some emotions in her face that I hadn't seen in a long time. What

does it feel like to lose your daughter who is right in front of you and then watch her come back to life? It was amazing. She started to have conversations with me and she even went out to lunch with my church group. I couldn't believe that the daughter I use to know was still inside of her!

At first I didn't understand how, if she was off all the pain medication, she could come to life. I didn't know that the marijuana was what was pulling her through this wretched time of withdrawal. When I found out, I was so, so scared that she would be arrested and then I would lose her again. I still am scared that, because marijuana is illegal, my daughter's life could take a bad turn again. I wasn't worried that my daughter's marijuana use was unsafe because as a teenager in the 60's I had experienced plenty of my own use of marijuana. All the terrible things that they said would occur, like moving on to other drugs, or giving up on society, never came about. Ultimately, I graduated from college with honors and have had a wonderful career as a pediatric occupational therapist for 35 years. My daughter's use of marijuana as an alternative to the horrible pain medication, brought my daughter back to me, and it is wonderful.

You may think that marijuana is a bad drug, but if you knew my daughter on prescription drugs, and then saw her pain free from medical marijuana, well, you would vote for it's legalization in a minute.

I have spent almost all of my adult life taking care of other people; first, all my disabled children in school, next my mother, then my addicted husband, then my sick daughter, and now my sick son that also has developed Crohn's disease. My children need to be set free of pain, and legalizing marijuana would let them become the people they so desperately want to be. Please let my children experience life. Let them get up in the morning and sleep at night without pain. Let my daughter finish college and play with my grandson. Let them discover what it is like to be like most of us - able to pursue our dreams.

I believe that Connecticut is a great state to live in; I have lived here all of my 57 years. I voted at every single local, state-wide and federal election since I turned 18. I believe that politicians CAN make good decisions. Please help my family.

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