



Soaring Above Co-Addiction™

***Helping Your Loved One Get Clean,
While Creating the Life of Your Dreams***

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Soaring Above Co-Addiction
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A Time for Change

When I found myself chasing a drug dealer through my neighborhood streets, I realized just how insane my life had become. I came home from work to find my husband, Dean, standing outside of his dealer's car. I knew it belonged to his dealer because I had seen the car before. I had followed my husband a couple of weeks prior when I had suspected that he was going to get drugs. The old white Cadillac parked outside my house was the same car I had seen that night. Coming home to discover my husband purchasing drugs right outside our home was more than I could stand.

As soon as I started to pull up into the driveway, the Cadillac sped off. I was too furious to let him get away that easily. I spun my car back around and took off after him. I knew it was crazy, but my anger had the best of me. I was tired of struggling to pay the bills while this lowlife took our money.

As he weaved in and out of the neighborhood streets, I stayed right behind him. He finally pulled over to the side of the road and stopped. I swerved my car up in front of his, blocking him from taking off again. My adrenaline had taken over and at that moment I felt invincible. I am not a big woman by any means. I am 5'3" and about 120 pounds, but that didn't keep me from walking right up to the side of his car to confront him.

His window was down, allowing me to get a good look at him. His dark black skin was shiny with perspiration, his head was shaved bald, and his impressively muscular arms were covered in tattoos. Normally I would be intimidated by somebody like this, but I felt no fear. I was surprised by my own aggressiveness.

“Don’t you ever come around Dean or my home again, do you understand me?” I stated in the strongest voice I could force out.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he replied. As I looked into his eyes I could sense that he was nervous. I’m sure this was the first time he had ever had a crazed wife chase after him.

“Oh, I know who you are. You’re the asshole who’s been taking all of the money that I work so hard for. I have a son to worry about, and if I ever find out that my husband gives you another cent, you’ll be sorry,” I threatened.

“Look,” he said with his hands up and his palms facing toward me. “I don’t want any trouble from you. I don’t know what you think is going on but you don’t have to worry about me.”

“I know exactly what’s going on. I’m just warning you to stay away from my husband.”

“Alright, no problem,” he responded.

With that I turned around and got back into my car. As I pulled away, I pushed the gas pedal to the floorboard, causing my tires to spin and kick gravel up at the Cadillac. For a brief moment I felt powerful. I was proud of myself for standing up to this seemingly tough man.

As I drove back home, I started thinking about how reckless my actions really were. I had no way of knowing what the outcome would be of a confrontation like that. I had no doubt that somebody who sells drugs would carry a gun on him. People get shot everyday when deals go bad. Here I was chasing after a drug dealer whom I had caught completely off guard.

At that moment I was able to look at myself clearly. I

realized that my life had spun out of control. Some say that addicts have to hit bottom before they will get help. Maybe the people involved with addicts have to hit a bottom as well. My life had become as crazy as my husband's. In many ways, even more so, because I was going through it all sober. I didn't have alcohol and drugs to help cover up the pain, and I didn't have an addiction as my excuse.

I was living a constant cycle of arguing and crying, driving around late at night looking for my husband, buying back our belongings from pawn shops, putting myself into dangerous situations, feeling alone and confused. Every attempt that I made to help my husband seemed to fail. Even the drug dealer I confronted sold more drugs to him just a few hours later. Something had to change.

That night I pulled out a journal that my sister had given to me as a gift. It was so beautiful that I could never bring myself to write in it. It had pictures of angels on the outside and its lined pages were trimmed in gold. I grabbed a pen and began to write.

I was able to find a lot of clarity through my writing. I remembered years back when I felt so confident. I had big dreams, but somewhere along the way I had given up on them. I wanted my husband to get well, but at the same time I knew that I had to start taking care of myself.

It had been so long since I put my own needs first that I could hardly figure out what those needs were. I created a detailed plan. It included exercise to improve my self-esteem, saving money for my future security, and putting a focus on my own emotional strength. I was ready to take my life back.

The next day I started to put my plan to work. I chose walking as my exercise. It didn't cost me anything and it got me out of the house. It felt good to be getting in touch with my body again. Years before I had been physically fit and I had forgotten how empowering exercise can be. Each evening after dinner I would change into my walking clothes and off I went.

That first week my husband was taken by surprise. "Where

are you walking to every night?” he had asked me in a worried tone. I think he feared that I had met up with some hunky neighbor and now we were having a passionate affair. I figured it might do him some good to worry about what I was up to for a change. After just one week of my new walking routine, I was already feeling stronger.

My next goal was to establish a savings account of my own. I set up an account through my work which came directly out of my paycheck. I started out small so my husband wouldn't notice. It wasn't long before I had several hundred dollars saved up. It was in my name, and for the first time in a long time I felt a little bit of security.

My pastime in the evenings became reading. My new friends were Dr. Wayne Dyer, Melody Beattie, and Depok Chopra, to name just a few. I looked forward to climbing into bed each night to take in their insight and knowledge. These authors helped to encourage me and with their advice I began to evolve.

I learned how to use affirmations and visualization, which helped me to become more positive. As the weeks passed, I was amazed at how much I had changed in such a short time. I was blooming into a new woman. Even though my husband was still caught up in his addiction, I was feeling peace within myself. For a long time I didn't think I could be happy if my husband wasn't clean, but I was now learning that my happiness wasn't about him at all.

My husband noticed the changes and I sensed a newfound respect from him. What was once a household filled with hostility had now become quite calm. Although he was still using, I was no longer consumed by his problems. I encouraged him to get professional help and he slowly became more receptive. But each time he got close to admitting himself into treatment, he would get scared and back out.

One day I woke up, looked around, and as if I suddenly had a new set of eyes, I realized that it was time to get out of this situation. I gave my husband an ultimatum. Either he went

into treatment that day or I was leaving him. He had heard this threat before. I'm sure he thought I was bluffing, but this time I was ready to follow through. He chose not to go. The next morning I left with my son and moved into my father's home.

Leaving was the toughest thing I've ever done. Dean would show up at my father's doorstep wanting money, or wanting a shoulder to cry on, or threatening me (sometimes all three in the span of a few minutes). He was emotionally out of control and there were times when I feared what he might do. His addiction was testing me, but I stayed strong and refused to return home unless he went into treatment.

Close to one month later he was ready to surrender and get help. He admitted himself into a three month in-patient program. He emerged from treatment healthy and strong and with a new outlook on life. It has now been over five years, and we are sharing a healthy marriage together.

I now look back and see how quickly his recovery came once I left him to face his own reality. I have often thought about how much time had been wasted. If I had only stood up to his addiction a decade before, we might have avoided many years of turmoil.

But the truth is I just wasn't ready yet. I had, in fact, left him many times before, but I always quickly returned. It took building up my self-esteem and harnessing my inner strength in order to face that challenge. I know that Dean's courageous willingness to finally get help came as a direct result of my own personal changes.

I still occasionally catch myself falling into old patterns. I start to worry that Dean will lose his strength. I sometimes try to control situations, but I am healthy enough now to stop myself. Addiction is a cunning disease and could always rear its ugly head again. Relapse is many times a part of recovery. I know that Dean works every day to stay clean. I also know that my own positive outlook contributes to his success.

I used to look to my husband to make me happy. Because he was an addict, he always failed at that job. I now understand

that I am in charge of my own happiness and that there is nobody in the world (including my own husband) who can steal it away from me.

We all want to believe that we will live to a ripe old age, but none of us knows our own fate. For those of us who love an addict, we tend to put off our own dreams and goals while we attempt to help our loved one get his or her life in order. We take the focus off our own lives in order to put all of our energy toward them. We may even come to believe that our sole purpose in life is to help save the addict.

Don't make the mistake of living your life in a supporting role. Our time here is fleeting. If you put your own desires aside, waiting for the right timing, your chance for personal fulfillment may come and go. This is your life—you're in the leading role. It's time to live it like the star that you are!

Suggestion:

Keep a journal as you make your way through this book. You may remember stories that you had forgotten about—write them down. Write any ideas that you read and want to remember. Write down your dreams and goals. Throughout this book, I will have more suggestions for your journaling. Keeping a record of your thoughts and feelings is an important part of this process. You don't need an expensive journal. A ninety-nine-cent spiral notebook is as good as anything. What your journal looks like is unimportant. It is the words that go into it that will have meaning.

*Nobody gets to live life backward.
Look ahead, that is where your future lies.*

-Ann Landers