

## "Funny girl" finds support in faith and family

by Jenn in Pennsylvania

I was voted the funniest girl out of my graduating class in 2006, but what my class did not know, what no one knew, was that I was not okay. Throughout my life I continuously put on a mask of indifference; I never felt anything and I never would think about who I was or who I was becoming. Instead of understanding such essentials, I made jokes and pointed fun at those who did. I laughed on the outside about people who had drive or who had a purpose. I just wanted to party and forget about life.

I wasn't always that way, I was an honor student up until 10th grade and excelled at every sport I played; so why wasn't I happy? In 10th grade, I began to develop extreme stress during basketball season. I used to love basketball and everything about it, but something about me changed and I began to dread practices and games. I would get so nervous about messing up that the worrying made me sick, and the idea that I could not get it together would frustrate me to the point of tears. During the season, one of my classmates overdosed and died, and that was the exact moment in which I lost touch with reality.

The world felt dark and pointless and there seemed nothing for me except drugs and alcohol. I never talked about my problems because I never knew how to put them into words. I eventually became addicted to a prescription painkiller, and my friends who were around for the party were not there for me. Going through withdrawal on my own made me even more bitter and made me abuse other substances instead. I am rather ashamed to say I honestly do not remember much from those last two years of high school because I abused drugs every day and even passed out at my graduation from taking five muscle relaxers. Not long after graduation another friend of mine died in a car accident and his death hit me really hard. After a few weeks of being depressed, I somehow suppressed my feelings and issues with his death and moved on. After high school, I decided to go to college, mostly because it was expected of me. I chose to major in business administration, and my first semester was going rather well. But, toward the end of the semester I was diagnosed with ADD, and then shortly after that, another friend of mine died in a car accident. My emotions were all over the place, and I began obsessing over car accidents and death. I started believing that somehow this tragedy was my fault.

I started going to therapy and was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. I was shocked to have an anxiety disorder, but then, the anxiety attacks became a daily occurrence for me. These attacks were the most emotional, hurtful, scary events. I began abusing my medications, going through a bottle a week, partying nonstop and losing sight of academic responsibilities. I felt like I completely lost everything, but strongly believe that my paranoid feelings toward death and everything else really were correct. I fooled myself into believing the world was something else and everyone was not as they seemed. I felt hopeless, depressed, alone, and trapped. Therapy, during this time, was my religion; everything said in that room was truth in my mind. But what I did realize is that it made me far worse because therapy made me think, and once a person begins to think on the levels I was thinking on, the world becomes black and white, full of hate, and pointless. I started to believe that my family members were my enemies and that they were trying to hold me down, but they were trying to pull me back up.

Finally, I got myself out of that dark place. I quit therapy, found God, trusted my family, and I wanted more. I wanted to prove to myself that I am worthy of living and I wanted to make my family proud. I wanted to feel alive for the first time in years. Through all of that suffering, I found true compassion.