



Day 8: Lessons from Laura

We've now gone through 7 days of Lessons from Laura, a series of articles that will appear every day in January. Laura Bradfield overdosed and died at age 29 on December 21 after a 15-year struggle with addiction. Today, I'd like to look back over the facts and figures I quoted in the first 7 articles, then give you a preview of what to expect this week.

Addiction is all around you.

- **27 million Americans** suffer from drug and alcohol addiction
- Ages 12-17, 1.3 Million Teenagers or **1 in every 12** are addicted
- Ages 18-25, 16.8% or **1 in every 6** are addicted.

Addiction affects more than just the addict.

If you take 27 million addicted Americans, then multiply that number by 4 (the average number of people in a family), you now have over **108 million people whose lives have been disrupted** by the addict in their family. Not to mention, there is a cascade of friends and co-workers to add to the numbers.

Addiction is costly.

Abuse of tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs is costly to our Nation, exacting more than \$740 billion annually in costs related to crime, lost work productivity, and healthcare.

Addiction starts early

Nine out of ten people with substance addictions first begin using before they even turn 18. In fact, substance abuse before the age of 15 can make a person 6.5 times more likely to develop a full-blown substance use disorder later in life. **90% of addicts began using before they left high school.**

The children of addicts are 8 times more likely to develop an addiction.

Addiction is deadly.

Overdose deaths are already the third leading cause of death in the United States, increasing 21% from 2015 to 2016.

My Takeaway

If you've read these articles and agree that addiction is all around you, impacts millions, and can affect you even if it hasn't already congratulations. You've now completed Step 1 – there is a problem and it applies to me.

In upcoming articles this week, I'm going to focus time on how the family is responding to the addict and start to offer some thoughts on how to make this response less traumatic.