

Dear Parent,

My name is Lea Minalga; I live in Chicago and am a Parent Coach at Partnership for Drug-Free Kids. I'm so sorry about your troubling circumstances and my heart aches with yours. When our beloved children are struggling, we as parents can feel so distraught, overwhelmed and helpless. I am so proud of you for reaching out. I'm sure this was hard to do but very brave and the absolute correct thing to do!

Please know that you are not alone and we care about you and your child very much. It is our honor and privilege to come alongside you and offer hope and practical help. Thank you for taking this leap, I am certain the tools and resources offered by the Partnership will be a tremendous aid to you and a comfort during this difficult and unsettling season.

My own son Justin became addicted to heroin when he was just 16. I was a frantic, frightened mess of a mother and felt so lost, hopeless and alone. Back then I blamed myself, had no joy and expected the worst. Justin went to numerous treatment centers, had several near death overdoses, countless relapses and a few jail stints. I was scared to my core and life was just plain awful. Today Justin is in recovery, doing well, giving back and a person I am grateful to call mine.

This is a disease but treatment is available and it works. People get better every single day. Do not despair, never give up or lose hope! Remember this is not your fault and it is not your child's fault either.

In the middle of all my personal mayhem and struggle I found the Partnership. I met the most gracious, empathetic, wise and nonjudgmental group of souls that just embraced me and my son unconditionally. How was I so lucky? They have helped me in countless ways and I cannot sing enough praises about them and their compassionate hearts. They understand... they get it! Scientists, doctors, treatment specialists, counselors, lobbyists and parents are part of their team. It is frankly an amazing collaboration of caring and committed people...all focused on parents, teens and their families.

To date, the Partnership still keeps up with my son regularly; impressing upon Justin that he is worthy, important and cherished. They are a blessing and a gift that has touched my life so much it is impossible to express in a letter.

May they be a blessing to you as well. Please take good care of yourself and trust that others stand in your corner supporting and encouraging you.

Sincerely,

Lea Minalga