



Drugline

0808 1 606 606

Tough love!

Helene Gold's story

It's a very different Helene Gold I meet today, a happy-go-lucky mother of three and grandmother, tanned from a recent trip to Spain, full of smiles and chat, looking radiant.

But seven years ago this very same woman telephoned me distraught and crying, telling me she didn't think her son would make it through the night without dying of septicaemia.

This is Helene's story.

A mother's torment

It seems a strange thing to say but I never spotted Darren was taking drugs until he actually told me. I suppose that's because I had never had any contact with illegal drugs and the whole scene was alien to me. He had been somewhat rebellious throughout his teenage years. He'd never held down a job and preferred to hang around with his friends than do anything constructive but I didn't attribute this behaviour to drugs.

Darren could be very deceitful. Once he claimed to be working for a local double glazing company, so my husband and I decided, out of the goodness of our hearts, to save him the bus journey and pick him up from work, only to discover that he didn't work there at all. He was living a double life.

It wasn't until he came back from a trip to Israel that I was first confronted with his drugs problem. He was very ill and at first I didn't understand why. At this point he admitted he was on drugs but didn't actually tell us his addiction was heroin. We tried to help him

and offered him the opportunity to stay at home with us again, even though he had stolen from us time and time again in the past.

For a couple of weeks all went well. He stayed at home and seemed to be getting better. He had a consultation with a counsellor at **Drugline** and I even arranged a private consultation with a doctor. But things soon went downhill. He didn't attend the consultation, money went missing from home and the lies and deceit had started again.

The lowest point hit when Darren's girlfriend finished with him and he went right off the rails. He was heartbroken and nothing we could say or do seemed to help. He rapidly slipped into a deep depression and his behaviour became uncontrollable – so much so that he started to cause confrontations at home. My husband and I began to argue.

We just couldn't take any more so we asked him to leave.

On the streets

This was an awful time for me and I worried constantly. We heard from Darren less and less and when we did, he only wanted money. We really didn't know what to do. I knew he was living on the streets, stealing and taking drugs, but hardest of all, I knew there was nothing I could do to stop him.

I felt anxious, depressed and helpless. He knew he had a family that loved him dearly, that he was now an uncle and had nephews and nieces that really wanted to see Uncle Darren, but all he cared about was the drugs.

For us it was a downward spiral. Every time we saw Darren he'd got worse and seemed to care less and less about himself and indeed anyone else. It was heartbreaking. One night Darren knocked on the door begging for money. He looked at death's door. One of his legs was twice the size of the other, he was thin and unshaven and looked like a man in his seventies, not a young man in his mid-twenties.

My husband screamed "Get him to the hospital" and yet Darren was still begging for one more fix.

On arrival at the hospital he was prioritised as urgent and seen immediately. They tried to give him blood but because of the damage he had caused by injecting into his veins they had to put a Hickman line straight through to the heart. The swelling on his leg burst. He was screaming in pain whilst they cleared the fluid away.

I sat at his bedside until he was comfortable, then, physically and emotionally exhausted, I went home.

He wanted to live

The next day we visited Darren. Whilst sitting with him the doctors told us that they had removed some of the blood clots but he now had septicaemia. The next few days were a life and death situation. Overhearing the doctors, Darren decided that he wanted to live and not die. I believe that this was indeed his turning point.

Released from hospital, Darren came to stay in our home, whilst reducing the methadone to clear the drugs out of his system. Then, on a shopping trip, Darren was spotted on CCTV and arrested for crimes committed whilst he'd been on drugs, and sentenced to 18 months in prison. I pleaded with the judge that if they were going to give him a custodial sentence let it be in a prison with rehabilitation facilities.

Darren served his time and continued to pursue sobriety, and has now been clean for nine years.

I feel like I've got back the son I lost for so many years to drugs. I attended his wedding three years ago in Sri Lanka, something I'd never dreamed of. Today, he works as an Outreach Worker for **Drugline**, using his own awful experiences in the hope that young people will learn from the mistakes that he made in his early life.

Needless to say we now are very, very proud of Darren.

Drugline Outreach Education Programme

Drugline provides comprehensive drugs and alcohol education and awareness programmes, which are tailored to suit young people in schools and youth clubs. For more information contact Darren Gold on **020 8554 3220** or visit **www.drugline.org**.