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## An Important Lesson I Learned While Growing Up

Growing up as the youngest child of two I always remember my life being pretty good. I was the baby of the family and my mom would always make sure I had whatever I wanted whether my sister got the same treatment or not. I was a great athlete so my parents never made me carry a job while I was growing up as long as I was playing sports they were happy. As my life went on and I got older I knew I would play baseball in college so that's where all my focus began to go throughout my last two years of high school. I managed to play baseball for a year and then move onto the working force and my life would only get crazier from there. I learned some valuable lessons being out on my own that I will never forget. I have many stories to tell when I get older some for the better and some for the worst but as I look at things it's one big roller coaster.

As far back as I can remember life was always pretty easy for me. We had a very close family and did many things together. We would go on camping trips, go to sporting events, have cook outs and any other fun activity we could find to do. Now growing up I usually would spend most of my time either playing sports or out on my grandpa's farm hanging out with him. He was a huge role model for me growing up and I looked up to him very much. I would go to rodeos all over the west coast with him to watch him participate in the professional cow pinning circuit. During this part of my life all through grade school I didn't have a worry in the world and my life was perfect in every way that I knew. I always had a smile on my face and didn't even know what getting in trouble was at this point.

Eventually I grew up as we all do and moved onto middle school and that was a huge culture shock school work wise for me. I would go to class and never really pay attention and homework just wasn't anything I was interested in at all. I had one thing on my mind and one thing only and that was sports. I grew up in a very sports driven family so it was pressured on me at an early age. I got in a little bit of trouble while I was in middle school but for the most part I would come home and practice whatever sport I was playing at the time and leave my home work alone. I think that middle school is where I really started to get myself into trouble school wise though because as a "great" athlete we would always catch breaks on home work and not have to do all of it. At this point in my life though I felt if that's the only thing I was doing wrong was home work stuff and not getting in trouble then I was doing pretty good for myself and on the right track to success. I was at a pretty steady point in my life and my roller coaster of a life was like a kiddy ride at Disney land at this point.

Then high school, what a huge reality check that was. My teacher's at this point still knew who the athlete's were and still gave us breaks on our homework so that part was nice. I started out my freshman year breaking my hand in our opening game of football and it only got worse from there. I finished the football season out and had a very successful season once I was out of my cast. Then came basketball season, and the day before our first game I was in wood shop class for my first class of the day and the worst thing ever happen to me. I was making a little box and had to use the table saw to cut a piece of wood and as I was pushing he wood through I cut off two fingers and shattered my thumb knuckle. This was a very devastating blow to my life and I thought I would never be able to play sports again. I spent about a month in the hospital and they put one finger back one while the other was to mangled to fix and I continued

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on with sports. As I went through high school I never did any drugs but did party and drink and have a lot of fun. I graduated in 2003 and on to college for baseball I would go.

I enrolled in Linn Benton Community College in the fall of 2003 to play baseball and couldn't have been more excited. That's when the partying really began and I would then really fall behind in my classes. I had never had teachers who didn't just pass me because I was an athlete so I was struggling big time in this new environment called college. We had study session every Tuesday and Thursday after practice and I would constantly be playing catch up with homework. I just didn't learn though because as soon as I got home I would go out and party and get behind once again and struggle to stay eligible to play baseball. Now growing up and being pressured to play sports year round while playing baseball year round as well it really started to wear on me. I came home one day and told my mom I just don't think baseball is for me anymore and I wouldn't be playing the next year as well as quitting school. She supported me 100 percent and said she would help me find a job and so that's what we did and into the real world I was.

I started working at Les Schwab Tires in Lebanon and thought to myself what a great career I have ahead of myself. Now I didn't have the greatest supporting cast of friends at the time but they were fun to be around so I moved out and got a town house since I had a job finally and let them stay whenever they wanted. This is where my roller coaster life began to take its toll on my life. It was constantly work all day then come home shower, change, eat and party with my friends until around two in the morning then sleep for a few hours and back up for work. At this time I wasn't old enough to drink but I had people buy me and my buddy's alcohol and I started getting in lots of trouble with the cops. I got a lot of minor in possessions of alcohol and it was starting to get me in trouble with work. I knew that you could transfer out of state to other tire centers so I requested to be transferred to start over and find good friends to be around to straighten my life out. My transfer got accepted and off to Spokane Washington I would go to start a new life with new people and turn my life around while I was still young.

My first couple months in Spokane went great and I had made some very good friends who didn't get in trouble and would keep me out of trouble as well. Then we hit winter season and had to hire on our winter help to get us through the busy season and things got worse from there. We hired two guys that where exactly like the friends I had moved away from and I thought wow finally some fun people to hang out with that I share interest with. I started hanging out with these guys every day after work and would party almost every night just like I did when I lived in Lebanon. I then took it a step to far and started smoking weed and doing cocaine with these guys and thought I was invincible and never would be caught. I was 21 years old at this point and two years from assistant manager and well on my way to success. One night we had a huge party and drugs where involved and someone we worked with saw us and reported it to our boss. He held a random drug test that following Monday and we all three failed and got fired and my career and life went down the drain.

I bounced around from job to job at this point and sold some drugs on the side to get by. I lied to my parents about it and they finally found out and boy where they ever mad at me. Once again though they supported me through my rough times and gave my advice and guidance to get myself back on track and change my life that was so up and down I didn't know what to do with. I continued to sell drugs and work little side jobs for about a four or five months to get by and pay my bills. I had a couple run in's with the cops with alcohol and bar fights but never got in trouble with the drug part of it so I just kept on going in the wrong direction. It wasn't until

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February 15th 2011 at two in the morning I got a text message from my sister saying that I would never get to see my nephew who had been born in October, because she didn't want him to look up to me or think I'm a good person. That hit me really hard and was my wake up call to do something with my life and do it quick because I didn't want to miss out on my nephew's life.

The following day I would go to the Navy recruiters office and sign up to take my tests to enlist. I passed my test on my first try and then had to wait on a waiver to come back because I was missing half a finger. I never told my family I was joining the military at this point because I didn't want to not get in and be a failure in their eyes once again. A couple weeks had went by and I finally got a call from my recruiter and he told me my waiver had come back and it was time to go pick my job and find out when I would be leaving for boot camp. Now I, being the little shit I had always been I didn't tell my parents still. I met up with my recruiter and picked my job and found out I could leave in two weeks for boot camp and it was then I called my mom around eleven at night and told her I needed them to come get my stuff because I was leaving in two weeks for boot camp. There was happiness and sadness both with my new life decision but I know to this day my family couldn't be more proud of the life decision I made that night because it changed me as a person and I would never touch drugs again.

I did five years in the navy and separated honorably and I have never seen a more excited person than my mom the day I flew home with my honorable separation papers in my hand. Not only was she waiting but there was my five year old nephew who was the reason for my lifestyle change with a huge smile on his face waiting to see his uncle Justin come home. Along with those two my dad, grandma, my son, and my little nephew with my brother in law and sister all waited as I came up the escalator at the airport finished with my military time and start a new life on the right path. Now throughout those years my life had so many ups and downs that I consider my life a roller coaster but through all the bad times and good times I would have to say my life experiences I wouldn't trade for the world and I wouldn't do my life any differently if I could go back in time. My roller coaster of a life was perfect for me and taught me how to get through the bad and could and taught me how to be a better man and father.