

IN THE BEGINNING

January of his junior year, JJ Becker walked into a well-known pharmacy and explained to the man at the counter that his dog was sick and in need of needles for insulin shots. At home with his dog, Becker carefully extracted a needle from its case, loaded up the syringe with Methylone, shot himself in his favorite vein and waited for the waves to come.

Pushing back with his palms pressed against the edge of the table and his chair precariously perched on its hind legs, Becker sighed and knowingly smiled at his mistake.

“It might be easier for me to just start at the beginning,” Becker said.

“Middle school didn’t go well. I was a good kid but I was bullied pretty bad. I was different; I wasn’t willing to retaliate so I just laughed it off,” Becker said.

Home schooled in St. Louis, Mo. until middle school, Becker was hungry for acceptance from his peers. Extremely bright and still coming into his own, Becker’s middle years were plagued with physical and emotional bullying. The scarring he incurred in junior high began to shape his mentality about who he was and where he would fit in at Blue Valley West High School.

“By the time I got to high school I had plenty of friends, but I still didn’t feel like me. I felt like I was wearing a mask, like no one knew me,” Becker said.

The emotional stress of bullying during middle school took its toll on Becker in the fall of his freshman year. He sank into a state of depression and by the spring had become suicidal, “wimping out” only moments before ending his life several times.

“I started believing the lies [that I told myself] and even convinced myself I had no future. The lies became the truth,” Becker said.

Throughout his drug use, Becker’s faith taunted him.

“I was going to church every so often, but I wasn’t super religious at this point. I was afraid of hell though. That was the only thing keeping me from dying,” Becker said.

After experimenting with pills and alcohol over the summer, Becker was sent to a psychiatric hospital in November of his sophomore year. He stayed there for two weeks, but his mood remained the same and nothing was resolved.

“I expected nothing to be fixed. I was bitter at my parents and myself. I realized then that I had to find my own way out and that I had to try to make myself happy,” Becker said.

Some say happiness can act as a drug, and for Becker, there was more truth to this than for most. He smoked K2 for the first time in January, believing he had found his escape.

“It was like a catharsis. I started smoking periodically, mainly K2, and it turned into a weekly thing. By March, I was smoking once a day and also researching other drugs. I got a sort of high from that,” Becker said.

Researching helped Becker realize his gift: he was a chemical genius at making his own drugs. In May, he expanded his repertoire to LSD, Nitrous and Methylone, a combination of Cocaine and Ecstasy. The summer before junior year, he was constantly high, buying Virola Bark online to make DMT, a drug that when inhaled or consumed, immerses the consumer in a powerful psychedelic state.

But by the time school started again, Becker had quit his job and was running out of cash to continue to sell. His plan was to sell the K2 he’d been making. It was cheap and Becker needed the money.

“I was selling the K2 that I had made at school. I was also smoking JWH, the chemical they put on K2. It was the cheapest thing I could make without losing money on the sale,” Becker said.

Becker was caught by his parents a few months into his junior year. He gave them everything—his pipes, his drugs—and told them that he wanted to transfer to Blue Valley Northwest.

“I told [my parents] I needed to get out of West. I couldn’t be around these people and be expected to change. So I started off Northwest clean... started off,” Becker said.

Self-conscious and paranoid, he didn’t talk to anyone for awhile. Becker had stopped taking his depression medication because he felt like a zombie.

“It was worse than drugs because I was emotionless, and my depression was worse than ever because I was clean for the most part. I still wanted to do drugs,” Becker said.

Caught in a catch-22, Becker began stealing and drinking cough syrup in Decemeber, usually two bottles at a time, for the effects of the codeine.

“I was at the point where I was filling up grocery

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“IT WAS REAL. I FEEL LIKE I’VE BEEN REBORN.” journey to sobriety



carts with this stuff and walking out with it,” Becker said.

January of his junior year, Becker’s drug use escalated.

“I would go to Walmart with a BS story about how my dog needed insulin shots,” Becker said. “Shooting up was the ultimate high. It wasn’t the same as everything else. It had a darker tone to it. I would shoot up and all of a sudden it would hit me in waves. There were a lot of repurcussions, but nothing that would stop me.”

“I would shoot up and run out because of how expensive it was so I would go through withdrawal. That down was worse than the high. It felt like my body was being ripped apart, and then I would just black out. I knew a couple people that had died. We were all friends, but didn’t care about each other,” Becker said.

Talking about these friends makes Becker fidget in his seat. He pauses a moment and looks up through his lashes.

“I wish someone would’ve tried to stop me, but I know I wouldn’t have. It had to have come from me,” Becker said.

THE TURNAROUND

Becker finally acknowledged the severity of his drug use in March. He had been on a cycle of staying clean for two weeks and then caving and using drugs. These crash periods continued until Becker was asked by his pastor to speak to his youth group about his drug use.

“I knew drugs were ruining my life but I couldn’t stop. I was kind of going to church but I rejected the fact that God wanted to help me; I wanted Him to change my circumstances. So when my pastor wanted me to talk to my youth group about my experience, I told my story about how God is the only one that helped me out, although I didn’t quite believe it yet,” Becker said.

Senior Steph Hughes walked up and introduced herself to Becker after he spoke to his youth group that night and invited him to hang out with her friends the next weekend.

“My first impression of JJ was that he was really fun and outgoing. JJ is the kind of guy who never thinks about himself. When JJ told me about his past, my first reaction was shock. He was so outgoing and nice that it seemed crazy that he was fighting those struggles. He’s so open and honest about what he’s gone through and how he’s grown from it,” Hughes said.

“I met a lot of Steph’s friends and they all opened up to me right away. I thought it was going well, but then I began partying again. I was living a lie. When I thought about getting clean I couldn’t do it [by myself],” Becker said.

Becker knew this was a battle he couldn’t fight alone. In June, he was arrested two days in a row for smoking methylone, and then again two days later with a Minor In Possession.

“I came home from work really drunk, and punched a hole in my window. I left the house and was arrested down the street while I was sitting on the sidewalk. When that happened, I knew something had to change. I completely, 100 percent, turned my life over to Christ. It was the biggest effect anything has had on me. I was still struggling but now I had something to lean on,” Becker said.

Becker started praying to God to help him get through his struggle. The temptation was still there, but was never strong enough that God couldn’t help.

“This can be used for good. This pain, everything I went through, was all God’s purpose. It was real. I feel like I’ve been reborn,” Becker said.

Staying clean is one of the hardest things Becker has had to do, but he figures it’s not as difficult as keeping up a loving relationship with God.

“I have to work to build a personal relationship with Him, just like I have to work to stay clean. Drugs never filled up the void I had, God has been the most fulfilling thing to me. Unlike drugs, He’s renewable,” Becker said.

LOOKING FORWARD

Becker has found BVN to be a better environment for him. The lack of hard drugs and the constant support from his friends has allowed him to focus on the things he’s passionate about.

“I wrestle, and I also love music, listening as well as making it. I drum, but I also tinker with synthesizers,” Becker said.

Becker recently visited TCU and Baylor where he’s considering majoring in psychology.

“I’ll probably go into counseling for addiction and depression, or maybe even be a pastor,” Becker said. “I’m surprisingly not very good about talking about myself. I like listening.”

Before Becker leaves the interview, he jokes, “now you’ll have to tell me your life story.”