

## Jensen: Drinking and driving, my story

Contributed by Wendy Jensen  
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On Nov. 18, 2007, after a night of heavy drinking at a bar in Martinez, I got into my car and drove onto Highway 4. I was driving in the wrong direction and nearly killed many people. I finally came to rest near the Pacheco exit after colliding head on into another driver who was simply trying to get home to his family for the holidays.

The impact of this crash resulted in this man having severe injuries almost resulting in his death. I suffered a broken back, seven months jail time and three years probation. My license was suspended for a year, plus three months of DUI classes, court fines and restitution.

Up until this collision, I had a clean driving record. I owned a home with my husband of 11 years and our 5-year-old daughter. I had a job I loved for five years at a local school. To most, I seemed like just another working mother and wife except this mother and wife has struggled with alcoholism for 16 years.

I was pretty good at first hiding it, lying about it, denying it, especially to myself. I tried to get help through local alcohol programs, counseling and rehab. The thing was, I did it for everyone else. I did it to make them happy. I wanted to show everyone else that I could do it.

That was the biggest mistake of my life. I should have been doing it for myself all along like everyone was telling me. I never wanted to do it for me. I didn't like me, I didn't love me. I was a miserable person who loved alcohol more. And near the end, even more than my own family.

Sound hard to believe? Well that's the power of alcoholism. It makes you lose interest in all the things you once loved and loved doing. Consuming every ounce of who you are until you decide to change it, beat it, and kill it before it kills you. Or you can wait and do nothing like I did and continue on a path of destruction until you kill yourself or someone else in the process.

Never in a million years would I have ever thought I could cause such a horrible accident, cause the hurt and pain I have put my family and the victim and his family through. But I did and I will be living with that for the rest of my life.

This collision has been a big turning point in my life. It has taught me that sometimes in life, tragic things have to happen to us or someone we love no matter how much it hurts or who it hurts. To give us a reality check and open our eyes a little wider to the fact that someone with a higher authority has complete control over our lives and the power to take everything that means anything to us in an instant. To also help us realize that we are given one last chance to live life the way it was meant to be lived, with a purpose. Do you know what yours is?

I have learned that my ugliest personality trait was selfishness. I am now selfish in a different way. I put myself and my recovery first. I try not to worry so much over the things I have no control over. After all, our most destructive habit is worry. I have also learned that the worst thing I can be without is hope. I had, at one time, given up all hope that I could ever get sober. Now I am full of hope, strength and have the courage to keep up my sobriety and not give up.

Since my release, I have been working very hard to start a new life for myself. Being involved in my recovery is number one. I am looking forward to doing some public speaking and sharing my story with others who may be struggling with alcoholism. I am also starting a new career in the medical field as a CNA. And I am enjoying being a sober mother to my daughter.

Thank you to those who took the time to read my story. I hope that you remember my story and how quickly your life can be affected if your planning to continue to drink and drive.

Wendy Jensen is a member of Team DUI.

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