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On October 21st, 2018, our lives changed forever. Our 19-yr old son, Tyler, died, alone, in a bathroom of a sober living from fentanyl poisoning. We have no addiction in our family, I was a stay-at-home mom, involved in their school and knew all their friends. I had a false sense of security that this would protect my kids from using drugs. I never thought my son would die from drugs. I thought he was too smart and knew so much about the chemistry of every drug to ever die from them. That was before I knew about fentanyl. Fentanyl has changed everything.

When Tyler was little, he was obsessed with vacuums and brooms. He soon figured out that most clothing stores kept their vacuum in one of the dressing rooms. While I was shopping and trying on clothes, he would wiggle under the dressing room doors and pull out the vacuum. He was small for his age, and it was quite a sight to see this tiny red haired little 2-year-old struggling with a big vacuum. Tyler also loved to dress up and wore a pirate costume to preschool most days. He loved weapons and would pick out his Halloween costumes according to which plastic accessories they came with. Pirates and Power Rangers had swords, soldiers had rifles, Jedi's had lightsabers and old-time gangsters had machine guns, resulting in a young Tyler possessing all of those things.

Tyler was extremely intelligent, inquisitive and had mild Asperger's and ADD. He was constantly seeking thrills to replace the dopamine he was missing, from climbing the tallest trees at the park to climbing on our roof and playing

with fireworks. My son was polite, brilliant, funny, helpful, could fix anything and was a genius hacker.

He started having anxiety and depression as a young teen and started smoking marijuana when he was fourteen, to self medicate. It stopped working after a while and he turned to high potency THC products.

After that, Tyler started sipping promethazine codeine cough syrup that he found in our house, aka Lean, made popular by rap artists. At about this time after consulting with an addiction specialist, we had him yanked from his bed in the middle of the night by a transport team and he was taken to a wilderness program in Idaho. After that, he spent a year at a therapeutic boarding school in Utah. He came home, got a job and things were going well until he got injured at work and a workmen's comp doctor prescribed an opioid pain medicine. This triggered his addiction all over again. On October 21st, 2018, Tyler was found dead from ingesting fentanyl in the bathroom of a sober living.

The first two years felt surreal; my brain couldn't process the fact that I would never see my sweet Tyler again. Every time I would come home, I would expect to see him sitting on the front porch, which is where I last saw him. It has only been in the last years that the shock has started to wear off and it has felt real. I have guilt for feeling a sense of relief that I'm no longer having anxiety about what he is doing. This is the plight of an addict's mom, PTSD while they are alive and then guilt and then once they are dead, second guessing everything you did their entire lives.

Tyler's death has changed our family forever. Having to call his then 21-year-old sister, who was in college across the country, to tell her that her brother was dead, was one of the

hardest things I've had to do. To know that she would have to fly home alone, with a crushed heart, was unbearable. Having to tell his 16-year-old brother, about Tyler's death wasn't much easier. My dad had died less than a year earlier, and I had to have my aunt and uncle tell me mom. She and Tyler, or Tiger as she called him, were so close, I could not handle telling her. My kids both suffered from panic attacks and depression for the year after Tyler died and, on some days, still struggle with it. They both have trouble sleeping and concentrating. My husband is attorney and after Tyler died, he had trouble concentrating at work. It was a full two yers until he could give 100% at work. Every time we go on vacation and see other happy families; it is like a knife to our hearts. Whenever we take a family photo, it is clear that someone is missing, and our family will never be complete again. We are just one story of the many Americans lost every year from fentanyl. Each death has a ripple affect, causing permanent emotional harm to surrounding loved ones.

Thank you, Juli Shamash