**The impact of alcohol and drugs on relationships**

Alcohol and drugs have a great impact on relationships, especially families. Ever since I was a young child I have struggled with alcohol and drug abuse and how it’s affected my family.

Let me start off with my granddad. When my mother was a young child she was very close with her father. They had a strong relationship up until he began to have problems with alcohol. My granddad was diagnosed an alcoholic during his 20s but managed to stay sober for over ten years. During my mother’s teenage years he began to drink more and more until it started to get out of hand. He became more aggressive and not an enjoyable person to be around. My nanny and granddad began to have marital problems and decided to divorce. This was hard for the family, especially my nanny as she had five children and herself to look after every day.

I used to see my granddad when I was younger but I had to stop visiting him as his relationship with alcohol was far more important than his relationship with his children and grandchildren. I have many happy memories with him. I remember he used to bring my brother and I swimming and out to the cinema on the weekends, but that slowly began to stop until we didn’t hear from him anymore. My mother to this day still struggles to live without her father, knowing that he is living with this horrible shallow thing, and I will call it a thing because what else am I going to call it? I pray every night that someday he will get better and show up telling everyone how sorry he is for these years of pain and sadness he has given us, instead of years of happiness and good memories to look back on. My mother and I attended and continue to attend, counselling due to this.

During the period of time when my mother was struggling with her parents divorce, her brother, my uncle, was struggling with drugs. He was 15, taking drugs and involved in crime, putting himself in danger that he shouldn’t have been exposed to. He didn’t concentrate in school or care for his family, so my nanny had no other choice but to ask him to leave the house. He was first arrested at the age of 16 for robbery. He spent months in a juvenile prison and since then he has been in and out of prison his whole life. He is currently 32.

I also used to get to see my uncle. Occasionally he would visit my family and I in our home, until his relationship with my mother deteriorated. He threatened my mother in front of my brother and I. I don’t think I will ever forget that moment. A few months later my mother was in the post office at the local shop when two men came in armed with weapons and began to raid the shop. My mother was in there with my little sister who was 2 at the time, and my mother instantly knew that it was her brother. Imagine the heartbreak you would feel if you saw your sibling doing something like this. Knowing that this is the life they’re living, if their relationship with drugs hadn’t taken over their life they could of been something amazing, but, no. My uncle chose drugs and never learned to control himself or tried to get off them, he just kept on doing all he knew to do, which was to use drugs. We didn’t see or hear from him until about a year later when we found out he was prison for the next four years because of the robbery. Only recently I was at the shops with my friends and I saw him and I was shocked. He looked so different. He looked worse than ever. I felt sick knowing how bad he was. I felt so emotional and angry.

My testimony shows first-hand the impact alcohol and drugs can have on relationships. It can lead to falling out with family, divorce, violence and making bad decisions. When I told my mother I was writing this article and read it to her she was emotional but happy as well because I was writing about something that bothers me every day and has affected me deeply. I tend to bottle things up until I burst so I decided to write this essay to express my feelings and to share my story with you. Please, think about your family and friends before you are about to make a decision that involves alcohol or drugs. One bad decision can’t just ruin your life; it can ruin someone else’s too. I hope this article shows young people the impact alcohol and drugs can have on family and friends, and it helps people my age to make informed decisions.

**Sarah**