



The Consequences Of Our Decisions

By Chali Bentley

I MAGINE BEING ten years old and waking up to your whole family surrounding your bed; this is exactly what happened to me on April 20, 2002. I awoke and saw all my family members in my room so I immediately asked what was going on. My mom came to my side, grabbed my hand, and told me that my dad had died in a car crash while I was sleeping. Being only ten, I was not sure how to handle this sort of news; I could not decide if I wanted to cry or if I wanted to scream, so I just sat there in shock because I did not believe this could happen to me. The reason my dad had died in the car crash was because he made the decision to drive after drinking, which was not the best decision on his part. My uncle decided to go with my dad because they were going to the casino, but they never made it to their destination; my dad died instantly and my uncle suffered brain damage and died five days later.

This situation was very hard on my entire family. I was daddy's little girl and everyone loved my dad and uncle because they were both very humorous and were always a joy to have around. My family dealt with the situation the only way we

knew how. A service was held for my dad that I attended, and there was a service for my uncle as well, but I did not attend because it was too much for me to handle in one week. Our friends and family were very supportive in supplying us with anything we needed; they brought us dinner each night for over a month. People also sent flowers and plants to show us their thoughts were with us.

I was only in the fourth grade when this happened. The WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) was also taking place at my school at the time. Being a hard worker, I chose to go back to school the week after my dad died to accomplish the WASL. In spite of everything going on in my life, I only missed passing the WASL by one point. The portion of the WASL I missed was math. I know that I should have taken more time off to handle the loss and all my feelings. This incident could have been handled better by me in my opinion. I feel like I could have been stronger and more willing to help others than myself. Our family was very strong throughout the whole situation. I think that I could have handled the event better myself. My brother was only four at the time

of the occurrence. With him being that young I feel like I could have helped him better understand what happened. So that he knew exactly how to handle the situation.

From this experience, I believe that I have learned the consequences of drinking and peoples decisions/actions. At our high school there is a club called SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions). I have been a member of SADD for 3 years. My decision to join this club was because of my dad's death, and I want to do what I can to help prevent other accidents involving drugs or alcohol for others. By being a role model through SADD I believe I can prevent other accidents involving drinking and driving from taking place by being a member. I know that I will never drink and drive because I have witnessed the consequences of destructive decisions such as these. My dad was very wrong in the choice he made the night of his accident. Had he chosen to stay home or get a ride rather than drive, he would be alive today. But I like to think everything happens for a reason; maybe this whole incident was just a learning experience for me and my family. Now we are living examples, and we know how to make the right choices because we know what the outcome could be. I hope everyone can learn from my experience and will hopefully make better choices for themselves and others, so their family does not need to experience the pain of destructive decisions that mine has. 🚫

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Chali Bentley recently graduated from high school. *Alert Magazine* congratulates her for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage her in the pursuit of her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.