The phone rings. My brother is upstairs with one of his friends, and I am sitting in our den with my best friends, watching a movie. It’s pretty late, probably around 10:30 or 11. I know we are not supposed to be awake, but my parents aren’t home, so we stay up anyways. The phone keeps ringing, and when I finally realize my brother isn’t going to answer it, I do. It’s my mom. She has been crying. She explains to me that, for the 3rd time, my dad has been pulled over for drinking and driving, and he is in jail. I’m not sure what to say to her, but I would have to say that’s when I started to see who my parents really were, as an adult, not as mom and dad.

Both of my parent’s families have battled with alcoholism. My mother’s mom still does today, and my father’s mother died from a mixture of being overweight and alcohol. Both my mother and father have it as well. So it’s naturally in my genes. They say it’s a disease, but to someone who has lived with it all their lives and witnessed all the things I have, I still don’t see how it can be called a “disease.” For someone to choose a drink over their entire lives, their families, jobs, friends, to be an actual human being and enjoy life, is just too hard for me to grasp. I understand there are things that go along with being an alcoholic, like there is usually a reason behind the drinking. It helps people cope with some type of pain that has inflicted in their lives, and for my dad, it started to get really bad when his mother died. My mom has said he did drink when we were very little, but not to the extent he does now. I don’t really remember his mother dying, so I
don’t really have an idea of when he did begin to get worse until he hit rock bottom in my eyes.

My dad went to jail when I was beginning the 7th grade. In the state in Virginia, you are not allowed to get more than 3 DUI’s in a year, and he got his third in 7 months I believe. When he got arrested, he lost his job with a company he had been with for almost 20 years. My mom’s brother was his boss, which added more strain to our family once he had to fire him. I don’t remember how he got his new job, but before he was sentenced to jail time, he was able to get a position at a company called Acme Mechanical, that thankfully allowed him to be in a work release program from jail for the year he was imprisoned. During this time, we rarely saw him. I have a vague memory of sitting in the back of my mom’s grey Oldsmobile, with the roof’s fabric starting to bubble due to hot summers and the age of the car hanging down over my head in the back seat. The windows were those measly ones that barely went half way down to try to protect children from putting their parts out the window. I was told to stay in the back seat and not to get out, and I watched my mom go to a strange car I’d never seen before and wait for my dad to get out. At the time I wasn’t sure why he wasn’t driving himself, but I waved, not being seen, as he walked into an everyday looking building. It didn’t look like a jail, that was for sure.

After his year in work release jail, his father made his first and only attempt to help his son out. Before my dad went to jail, he unwillingly went to AA meetings here and there. Stories of whether he went, and if he did, he would go to a bar afterwards, are slowly creeping out of family member’s mouths, I guess since they think I am old enough now to know the truth, but either way, he did sometimes go. After jail though, my
grandfather felt placing him in a facility away from his family and limited stack of 
friends would do some good. He spent close to $10,000 for this rehab facility, and the 
only time I got to see him was when we dropped him off and when we picked him up.
Letters were allowed, but no visitations or phone calls. This was the real deal. It was a
place like on that show *Intervention*, if you’ve ever seen it. Anyways, he was supposed to
stay for I think 3 months, but didn’t make it. He said he was cured, and for a while did
well.

I guess I don’t really know the extent of damage I have in my life right now
because of my parents. I know there are struggles I battle with, especially in my own
relationship I am having now with my boyfriend. I bring frustrations and worries from
my family into our lives and I only hope one day I can be ok with what I have and let go.
He thankfully tries to understand and is building a life for me that is only the best
according to him. I am thankfully extremely close to my older brother. He means so
much to me and without his support and love, as well as my boyfriends, I don’t know
where I’d be right now. I love my extended family, but their judgmental eye is always
there. Their anger towards my father puts feelings of sorrow towards my mother, brother,
and me, but if anything we want to be happy when we are around those who love us. I
know in the next few years I will have difficult things to struggle with that deal with my
father’s and mother’s health, and I hope those close to me right now who have gotten me
this far can continue to be with me. All I can do is keep my chin up, my head held high,
and continue to finish school and build a life that I know I deserve. I love my parents, and
I know they love and are proud of me. Sometimes I just wish it wasn’t so hard.
This is a paper that I may have chosen to not show anyone, but it is a part of my
life and it is healthy to write about situations such as this. I actually have been dealing
with my father getting laid off, some to do with the economy and also due to his drinking.
I had a rough night with this tonight and just felt like I had to start writing about it. I
know I can add and fix it, but it did actually take me almost 4 1/2 hours to write because of
the content and topic. I should talk about things like this more often, and writing is the
first step to talking and dealing with things. I started at 4:00 and didn’t end until about 9.
I read a book by a man who struggled with a father who was alcoholic and his book was
very inspiring. It was called “Another Bullshit Night in Suck City” by Nick Flynn. I
could potentially take how he wrote his book and turn this paper into something like that.