

This is the true story of Andy, as told by his mother.....

Andy was born in 1982 and had a joyful life easily making and keeping friends. It was his mission to make friends and family laugh and have a good time and he was GOOD at it. He was class clown. He made parties come alive. When he grew older he helped good friends with their mental health and substance abuse issues.

But it all began to get harder for him to do as he became a young adult and thought he had to participate in drinking and drugs to fit in. He was good at hiding the extent to which he indulged in these activities and surprised everyone with his statements in a suicide note:

“My soul is already dead. Marijuana killed my soul + ruined my brain.”

He hung himself on March 1, 2014.

He had spent his last five years in a downward spiral of marijuana abuse, calls to suicide help lines, hospitalizations in at least 5 different mental health hospitals on 3 different occasions, and 2 sentences of court ordered mental health treatment. During the last week of his life he told his mother, father and social worker that he HAD to quit using marijuana to live but that he was unable to do so. He was addicted. It was doing nothing good for him except help him sleep. Without it he had nightmares.

Awake, his life was often a nightmare. He suffered for years. Andy worked with many mental health professionals and received a variety of diagnoses including Major Depression and PTSD.

One of his doctors noted in his records “Andy is a kind and gentle man. He is an honorable man. Andy is a smart man with goals and the skills to make them happen. Andy has a great smile and people are comfortable around him.”

For a time he functioned well, often having jobs, earning an Associate Degree and completing three years of active duty in the Army's 82nd Airborne Division, including a tour of duty in Iraq. But as the marijuana addiction gained control over him, he lost his insight into his own mental health. He isolated and avoided his friends and family. He quit his jobs and disappointed himself over and over.

Marijuana killed the soul and ruined the brain of a very fine young man. Marijuana kept him from seeking appropriate mental healthcare. Marijuana left family and friends reeling from this tragic loss. Before our country goes any further in legalizing marijuana for so-called recreational use and calling it safer than alcohol, I would hope Andy's voice can be heard. Andy told the world:

“Marijuana killed my soul + ruined my brain.”