

Jenaa's Story: Things Can Get Better



My name is Jenaa and this is my story. I am a mother of two children who has overcome a very troubling past. I lived a great childhood in Hutchinson, MN, living with my father and stepmother. I had a wonderful family, and three siblings who I was close with. My father divorced this relationship when I was twelve years old and remarried. This began the beginning of a very dark time in my life, but I didn't know it yet.

About a year after moving away from Hutch, I met a boy and soon found myself in an abusive relationship. I thought I could fix him, but he was addicted to meth. I know now that it was not my place to fix him. I left home at the age of 15 to be with this boy. I became pregnant with my first daughter at 16 years old. During my pregnancy, he had found treatment and was sober. My oldest daughter, Venessa, was born on August 25, 2012. My relationship with him was abusive free for about 15 months.

During this time, I was working and was the only financial support for my family. While I was at work one day, when Venessa was just 6 months old, the abuse had come back, but this time, not to me. He broke 10 of her ribs, both of her legs, her arm and he fractured her skull. She was placed in intensive care for about two months and she went through multiple surgeries. During this time my life felt like it was ending. I vowed to make sure I would be the best mother I could be for her.

I obtained my GED in November of 2013 and had my second daughter on September 21, 2014. Four months after having my second daughter I had found out about a pathway program to get a Certified Nursing Aide Certificate. I went to school for that and received it on May 12, 2015. My daughter's injuries had made me become very passionate about pediatric issues. I want the chance to bring light into children's lives who are going through such a sad traumatic period, which is so important to me. I had contemplated this passion while working in a nursing home for over a year until I decided to follow my goal of pediatric nursing.

I am sharing my story with you, a story of how things can get better. Today I am a proud mother of two beautiful children. I have learned motivation. I have a steady job that I love and I am an honor roll nursing student. I have to thank HOPE 4 Youth for teaching me the skills I need to be self-sufficient, helping me save the money I needed to buy my first stethoscope, because they help provide me with my everyday items and that helped me save my income for it. They also introduced me to Jodi and Duane Stark, who recently awarded me with their scholarship to follow my dreams, and help me be the mother my children need me to be. They are such a great supportive couple, and I know that I have these people in my life and HOPE 4 Youth every step of the way. I am so appreciative of all of the people at HOPE that have helped and will continue to help me. Please support the important work they are doing with young people like me. I don't want to think where I

would be without HOPE 4 Youth.