This is the Story of a Boy, Who Hit a Tree and Changed His Whole World

The True Story of Karl Shelton

So..., I was 17, young, dumb, and full of... fun? I had finally begun to overcome my struggles with ADD and all the social deficits that came with it. I had built a rather large network of good friends that were mostly positive influences and would do anything for me. I was an honor student with a bright future and a great job as a carpenter's assistant, picking up odd jobs as a welder. I had recently purchased a Fixer-Upper pickup truck that helped me earn extra cash hauling scrap. I was working hard and making my way in the world, and then it happened.

I was headed home from a long days work on a cold, rainy October night. The truck was loaded with scrap steel from the job and the roads were getting worse with every mile. I dropped my friend off at his house, and headed to mine. I made it to dirt, I was almost there. I stopped at the stop sign about a mile from my house and put my jacket on, and then it all goes black.

A day and a half later, I awoke in the pediatric ICU of sparrow hospital. I was startled and confused. A kind nurse with a gentle touch came to my side. I saw my family all around me. The nurse told me I had been in an accident. Barely coherent, I heard her say I hit a tree at a high rate of speed, less than a quarter mile from my house. After a few more days in the ICU I was sent back to my house to do outpatient physical therapy and Nero-Rehabilitation.

After a few more weeks I was able to return to school and reunite with my friends, but I wasn't me. I was different. I had lost all the progress I had made dealing with ADD and social awkwardness. I had developed quite a temper, with a very short fuse. I had become quite depressed knew that something was wrong, but I didn't know how to cope.

Feeling cold and empty, searching for answers and reasons why, I turned to drugs and alcohol. The combination of my temper, drugs, poor coping strategies and decision making skills had me growing more and more distant from those I loved. I began to burn bridges and sever ties with all positive influences. My bright future had burnt out like a candle in the wind. I lost all hope and had run myself into the ground. The ones I loved no longer enjoyed my company.

On a cold November morning it had all come to a boiling point. My family no-longer felt safe. It was my own mother, the one that had always stood by me and stuck up for me when no one else would, who called the cops. She had me removed from the property, opening my eyes in a way like never before. This was it; I had hit my all-time low.

After a few weeks of staying with so-called friends, I was fortunate enough to be able to admit to residential treatment. I first admitted to a beautiful facility called Origami. This place had many opportunities for me, but I was very challenged. After a month or so, it became apparent to my treatment team that I would need much more behavioral modification than what they were equipped to provide. I had to find a new facility.

After a few weeks of research, I found the Eisenhower Center. They were able to admit me on a short notice, and started me on a rigorous therapy plan. After a few months I was able to obtain a

job in the community, and move to a less restrictive unit. In the following months it became apparent that I still needed more help. I still was not able to cope with stressors, and still had impulsive behaviors. I struggled to hold down my job, due to poor communication skills.

I recently had to resign from my position at work, due to an inability to safely deal with the stress, but I continue to work for the Eisenhower center. After much help from the vocational therapy department, I have returned to college and landed a few jobs as a welding contractor. Being self employed, I was able to completely design, quote, bid and build a beautiful eighty five foot wrought iron hand railing not having a boss allowed me to work at my own pace, and keep the stress to a minimum.

I have come very far since that cold October night, but I still have quite a lot of progress to make before I am at the point I was at before I stopped at that stop sign. Before I can live in the least restrictive environment I need to learn to deal with my depression. I also realize that self employment is not a feasible option just yet, so I must work on being more employable. I have sustained from drug use quite well, but I still have a slight lingering alcohol problem.

It has been a long and winding road and thanks to the auto no-fault laws, I have found the help I need. I have been here, and I've been there, I've done horribly bad, but now I'm doing better. I am finding some answers as to what is wrong with me and reasons why. Today I find myself pulling away from that stop sign, gripping the wheel tight, hoping that someone doesn't run me and others like me off the road, and into that tree. This time I just want to make it home.