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## Life Changing Experience

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# *Life Changing Experience*

By Jonathan Whitton

On November 1, 2010, at 11:13 A.M. is when it all changed. As I heard this unfamiliar cry in the hospital room, I could feel my heart sink, and feelings of being completely and totally in love overcame me. Then I held her, making it all so real. I think it's safe to say that we all go through life-changing experiences. Mine, without question, was the birth of my beautiful little girl, Haylee Kaye Whitton. Haylee changed my life in so many ways and continues to change my life every day. One change was my going back to school to pursue a master's degree in psychology. Realizing my drinking prior to her birth was out-of-control, I knew I had issues with alcohol. The biggest change of all was learning how to truly love someone selflessly. Now it was no longer just about me.

Before the birth of my daughter, things were different. I only had to worry about myself and didn't have the responsibility of taking care of another life. I wouldn't go back to that place for the world. Haylee taught me that I had to grow up. That all the drinking I did before her was reckless, and that there was no place in my life for that type of a behavior if I was going to give her the love that she needed from a father. It was a pretty hard road realizing I was an alcoholic. It was even harder checking myself into rehab because I had allowed alcohol to control my entire life. There was no way for me to continue in my alcoholic ways and provide the emotional, financial, and realistic needs that my daughter was bound to have. My daughter didn't need a father that came home every day from work only to get drunk. She needed a father that would play with her and love her unconditionally and show her how she needed to be treated by her future husband, through the actions of her own dad. In my journey I educated myself about my alcoholism that had consumed my life. I learned a great deal about myself and that it was okay to love, that it was okay to hurt, and that there was nothing I could do about the past. Only the future was in my control, I had to go forward.

When you have a child, you all of a sudden start to evaluate your life, job, home, and goals. Well when evaluating mine, it brought me to a place where I decided that I needed to go back to school. After going through rehab, I realized I actually had a talent for communicating

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well with others. With that talent I also found success in taking back control of my life from alcohol. So I started giving back. I got a great amount of joy out of helping other people suffering from addiction. See sometimes it's not always about money; sometimes just doing good things to help other people make you richer than any amount of money in the world. So I decided to pursue a master's degree in psychology and go back to school in hopes that one day I could get my LPC and be a full-blown counselor for drug addiction and alcohol.

I never really had to learn how to love my daughter unconditionally, but there definitely was some new emotion that I was feeling that I'd never felt before. In my past life I was selfish; it was all about Jon. Haylee changed that very quietly. I learned that loving her was so much a part of me. She taught me that life is nothing worthwhile without loving someone to the degree that I loved her. See life was going to throw things at me that would hurt, but I was able to rise above that because it was no longer just about me. There were days that love scared me to death because in a second it could rip my heart out. My beautiful little sunshine changed my thoughts about love. She showed me that to love was to live and that it didn't always have to hurt. Funny how a new born baby could show a grown man how to love for the first time at the age of 28.

Children can be a reason for anyone to change in his life, but as for me, Haylee has given my life a reason to change. If it were not for her, I might be drunk at this very moment instead of writing this paper, or tomorrow I could be going about my old selfish habits instead of going to school to help others. Whatever way you look at it, my life is so much different because of her, and honestly there are thousands of ways she changed it all. My daughter wasn't planned by any means, but I thank God every day that you she is here now. Because of her I found a reason to be the best man and father I can, and that is the most life-changing experience I've ever had.