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“I was addicted to painkillers”

Elaine Domino tried to hide her habit but couldn't fool her husband.

HOW IT ALL STARTED

Four years ago, when I was 48, I was arranging a display at the furniture gallery where I worked as a salesperson when I fell backward off a ladder. I cracked my head open and crushed a disc in my neck as well as one in my back. The pain was excruciating, so the emergency room doctor wrote me a prescription for Vicodin, a powerful pain medicine. Once I took the pills, I felt relaxed and happier than I'd ever been. It was like I'd just won an Academy Award and seen the most glorious sunset. My back pain eventually lessened, but I still wanted the Vicodin—badly. I needed to have back surgery, and my insurance company hadn't



Elaine Domino hopes sharing her story will help others.

“[My husband] told me that although he loved me very much, he couldn't live with a drug addict anymore.”

approved it yet, so I was able to continue getting the drugs from another doctor I saw.

After a year, I graduated to Norco, a more potent painkiller. My husband, Stan, and my kids and stepkids—who are now ages 16 through 32—saw me acting loopy but believed I needed something for my pain. I thought I had everyone fooled.

MY MOMENT OF TRUTH

In 2004, two years after my accident, I'd built up such a tolerance to pain medicines that a doctor began prescribing OxyContin. Instead of making me feel euphoric, though, it left me feeling wasted. I could barely function, and I blacked out constantly—frequently at the dinner table, where my face would fall into my plate.

Stan knew what was going on, but since I still complained of pain from my accident, he felt he couldn't ask me to stop taking the medication. Instead, he began to hide the bottles and ration the pills. In the spring of 2005, after I finally had my second and final back surgery, he asked me to stop taking the pills altogether. He told me that although he loved me very

much, he couldn't live with a drug addict anymore. I remember thinking to myself, You are out of control; you're a complete embarrassment.

A few days later, I visited my doctor and was referred to a drug treatment center called the Waismann Institute, which

is in Beverly Hills, Calif., and near my home in Newport Beach. I've been clean for almost a year, and I'm no longer ashamed of what I've been through. If being open about my problem can help another woman who's addicted to prescription drugs, it's worth it.

Find out more

Check your use of painkillers

If any of the following statements describes you, seek help immediately. Call your doctor or locate a treatment program through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Go to www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov or call 800-662-4357 for more information.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am unable to stop taking the medication I'm on because it makes me feel so good. | <input type="checkbox"/> I experience intense mood swings (like being calm one minute and belligerent the next). | <input type="checkbox"/> I have experienced some or all of the following symptoms within just a few hours of taking my last dose: severe anxiety, insomnia, sweating, a runny nose, muscle spasms, chills and tremors. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am dissatisfied with my current physician and am looking to one or more other doctors who will provide me with more | <input type="checkbox"/> I have an increased sensitivity to sights and sounds. | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> I am unable to stop taking the medication I'm on because it makes me feel so good. | |

