

Ann's Story: Breakdown & Redemption

At the age of 34, Ann became pregnant with her son.

“It was a miracle,” she says. “After years of fertility treatments, I was pretty sure that it would never happen. Then, six months into a new relationship, I got pregnant and had my son. He is the love of my life.”

“My son’s father is an entirely different story though. In and out of prison, he left me with a lot to deal with on my own.”

Ann is a hard-working, responsible citizen with a successful career in the health care system. She works two jobs when necessary to make ends meet.

For a long time, Ann handled everything life threw at her. And she really held it together. Then, what she calls “the event” happened.

She’s not exactly sure what happened or why. It’s still a bit fuzzy. But she believes several factors combined into a perfect storm that led to a breakdown:

- The stress of being a single mom and her son’s only source of support
- A toxic relationship
- Environmental contaminants where she lived at the time
- An ongoing lawsuit with her landlord
- Two drugs prescribed to help with anxiety and other issues
- Unresolved childhood trauma

It was all too much.

Though she doesn’t know how she got there, she wound up in a gas station in New Hampshire having what looked like a paranoid episode. The police were called, and she was taken by ambulance to Dartmouth Hospital. That’s when DCF became involved.

They took her son into custody because she wasn’t able to take care of him and there was no one else. Her son’s father was in prison, his parents lived in another state, and her own parents were elderly and couldn’t care for him.

One day, she woke up in prison not knowing how she got there. That was her breaking point and the start of her redemption.

After months of hard work and supervised visits, her son is now back home with her. She is in therapy, working again, off all medications, setting healthy boundaries with her son's father, and practicing self-care.

"If a parent engages with their worker and places their child at the top of the list, they will usually succeed," said Ann's DCF worker David. "To her credit, that is exactly what Ann did."

Ann now sees what she went through as a blessing and a curse. While it was painful to be away from her son, the experience taught her a lot. It made her stronger. It taught her the importance of taking care of herself.

It also taught her that there is help available when you need it. And to not be afraid of it.

"The system worked," said Ann. "DCF did what they were supposed to do. They kept my child safe while I couldn't."

"My workers gave me the emotional support I needed with absolutely no judgement. And I am forever grateful for their help."

National Reunification Month is held every June to celebrate families who have overcome obstacles to provide safe, loving homes for their children and the professionals that helped them keep their families together.