

Dear Pharmacy Board,

My name is Michael, and my story with how I found Kratom, how I use it, and why I feel it should stay legal, is a story of hope. Let me begin my story from the beginning.

It all started in the late 90's. My mother fell down our basement stairs and broke her collar bone. She went to a young orthodontist by the name of Lefcowitz. At the time, he hadn't been practicing medicine very long. He still had the zeal most noble doctors have when getting into medicine. To help her manage her pain, she was prescribed Oxycontin. I suppose it helped, because she was able to do things that up until that point, she couldn't because of her injury. After a year, the doctor decided to remove part of her collar bone in hopes of helping to give a more permanent relief for her pain and get her off the meds. The surgery went well from what I remember, but it did not help. In fact, it made things worse. It caused her shoulders to limp, which caused more pain, which caused for higher doses of Oxycontin. Then came the Percocets. They were for the 'in between' management for her pain. And they helped for a while too, until my girlfriend's mother discovered she was getting these pain medicines.

Rachel's (my girlfriend at the time) mother (Sara) educated my parents in the process of crushing and snorting their meds. Once this happened, it was down hill. My mother's pain kept 'increasing' and so did the medications strength. Then, one day, I woke up to my mother screaming. My father had died in his sleep. I was 18 at the time.

My mother continued misusing her medication, even more so after his death. Around that time, my Sister moved out, and it left just me to take care of my mother. We drew closer after that. Well, we had been close as a mother/son typically are. But that is when she introduced me to Oxycontin and other opioids. For the next 10 years, I battled addictions to pills. It was the worst time of my life. Five years in, I started a family.

I unfortunately helped my wife get hooked on pills, as I had already been. So for the first 5 years, it was she and I on the hunt day in and day out, looking for our fix, while taking care of our two kids. All along, my mother was still getting prescribed her pain meds, from one doctor or another. And when she ran out early, she would buy more from her 'friends' she made over the years who also had an addiction with pills. Everyone we knew, had a prescription for pain meds in one form or another, or they knew someone else who did. It was an endless cycle.

Then my life changed. It happened one morning. My wife, myself, and two kids, were living with my mother, in her 2 bedroom home (when your an addict, its hard to pay the bills). My wife and I had been up all night, partying with my mother. She had just received her refill of her Oxy's and Percs. But around 5 in the morning, she went to sleep. Intent on continuing to party, the wife and I walked a few blocks away to a dealer to get more pills. It had snowed that week, and everything was bright because of the lights bouncing off the nearby paper factory.

When we returned, the kids, including my mother, was still asleep. Around 9am, everyone but my mother left, to go get some meds filled at a nearby pharmacy. When we returned, we found my mother in bed, still asleep, peaceful looking. Except she was no longer breathing.

Four months later, my wife gave birth to our 3rd child. We were robbed of our money for the electric bill while she was in the hospital giving birth, by some 'friends' we partied with. When we discovered the money missing, I was so distraught. I didn't know what to do. Neither of us had any family to call, or to ask for help. Our only 'friends' were druggies like us, and wouldn't help even if they had the money to. That, was the moment in my life that I hit rock bottom. We had a newborn in the house. The electric was on disconnect notice due to be cut off in a couple days, and I wasn't working. We had no income.

So, I went outside and I did the only thing I could do. I Prayed. As tears flowed down my cheeks, I begged God to forgive me for living such a debauch lifestyle. I had known better. I had wanted to change. So many times. But never had I felt such hopelessness as I did at that time. So I begged God, asking him to somehow help me get the electric paid, making a promise that if he did, I would quit everything. No more drugs. No more Pot. Even smoking cigarettes. And it was at that moment something popped into my head. Something I never would have thought of otherwise. "Ask Mr. Newman for help."

Mr. Newman was our relater. After my mother passed, we had decided we needed to move. We didn't know where to, but we knew we had to leave if we were to get clean. So in that moment, when his name popped into my head, the tears stopped, and a weight was lifted from my shoulders. I knew what I had to do. And I did it. And just as God helped me out, I kept my promise. I stopped everything. I went to the doc and asked for a prescription for nicotine patches. When people called to let us know they had 'goodies', we blocked their number. It was very difficult, but I was successful.

But, after moving, I still had a problem. In fact, it appears I just have an addictive personality. I made alcohol my new drug. It wasn't as bad as the pills, but it made family life troubling. Plus, I had enrolled into college to pursue my passion with technology. When I backed off the alcohol, I just felt..... unbalanced.

Unfortunately, no matter when a person lives, temptation lives just down the street. My wife became friends with some of our new neighbors. They had kids that got on the bus nearby, so did we. It wasn't long until she discovered they had access to the pills. Then, it wasn't long until I discovered my wife was taking out loans for her habit. And again, I was put in the position I had spent 3 years avoiding. I was hooked. Again.

I couldn't run this time. I wasn't going to upend our family and move to another city. It would just end up a repeat cycle. After a few months of using, my wife and I were able to stop. And we did so successfully for another 3 years. Then it happened again. We met someone, somewhere, somehow, that was into Oxy's and other pills, and it started again. But by the time I quit once more, I had been using enough that the withdraws had become almost unbearable. And that's when my wife and I went online to do research, and stumbled across Kratom.

Since 2017, I have been taking Kratom, successfully, and safely. Since then, I came across multiple opportunities to use. But thankfully, I never succumbed to the temptation. Also, I no longer drink anymore. Because of Kratom, I'm able to live a normal life, free from these temptations that once haunted me. My family has grown closer. I no longer bounce job to job because of the withdraws I experienced. And I am now a productive citizen working in Information Technology, making a descent 6 figure income to support my family and I. That's not to say I never had anymore issues. As the Bible says at Ecclesiastes 9:11: "Time and unexpected events overtake us all." But because of Kratom, I've been clean from all drugs for 9 years now. My wife, found she no longer needed Kratom a few years back and simply stopped. She only takes it for moderate pain that comes and goes with an issue she has in her hand. Concerning myself, I've been on anti-depressants for 7 years now. When I quit Kratom a while back, I took a bad turn and it not only effected myself, but others.

So, Just as I take my blood pressure meds, my Zoloft, my cholesterol, and my vitamins every morning, I take a dose of Kratom as well. And depending on my mood later in the day, I'll take little bit more. And over the years, through trial and error, I've found a healthy regime of herbs, vitamins, Kratom, and prescription medication, that really works for me.

I'm not a bad person. I love my family, I love my neighbor, and I love God. I just have something going on in my brain's chemistry that's different than others. If you ban Kratom in Ohio, you will be breaking a wellness formula that I have fought for so many years to create for myself. Sure, there are others in the community that would rather misuse this product. We've seen the people looking to make money off getting people addicted to Kratom from the use of very high dosages of certain parts of Kratom. I say ban those people! Ban the misuse of Kratom, and those who would take advantage of others to make money in such a way! But when it comes to clean, unadulterated Kratom, in it's natural form, you would be causing much more harm than good if you were to ban it.

This proposal comes off as a one-size-fits-all and the fact of the matter is there IS NO one-size-fits-all with Kratom. There are those who take it for it's legitimate properties in moderation. There are those who take it only when they are withdrawing from heroine, and there are those chase the high, any high, that will mix it with other drugs for illicit use.

Please, don't punish those who take it for legitimate purposes in moderation. Doing so would hurt so many people, including myself and my family. Find a better way to regulate its use. There are other states that support the use of Kratom this way. Don't be one that makes decisions based on faulty data, scared citizens, and those who would rather push pharmacology medicine to make money, than have a person take something that is natural and safe.

Thank you for reading my letter.

Sincerely,

Michael