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My story began on 12 September 1972 when I gave birth to a beautiful baby boy. Such joy for his mother, father and sister, three years older. Tom (not his real name) was a gorgeous little boy and went through his early school years without many mishaps – a few scrapes here and there. He was an average student but never extended himself. He had a change of school in Year 3 and again in Year 7. During his Year 7 year he stole a few dollars from a jar in our home – desperately wanted to be popular – friends were of utmost importance. Year 8 in a government school was not good and he repeated Year 8 at a private school where he continued his schooling until Year 11 when his grades fell right off. Half way through Year 11 he decided to look for a job and started work in a bank. This turned into a disaster as some members of the staff were smoking dope and Tom proceeded down that path. Hindsight is a wonderful thing and I now realise that his drug problem – marihuana, probably started at school in Year 11. We were very naive as a family with regards to drugs, our daughter being very straight down the line and never suggesting to us that there may be a drug problem. He worked in the bank for only about three months and I could see that he would be dismissed so he resigned. He continued to mix with his friends from the bank and although unemployed for some time was drinking and obviously smoking marihuana, at this time he was on the dole and foolishly I was not forcing him to pay board. He was picked up and charged for possession of marihuana and received a fine which meant he had a criminal record as he was already 18. He then drifted in and out of work for some months until he commenced a pre-apprenticeship course at TAFE in mechanical engineering which he completed. He was then accepted as an apprentice at an engineering firm. At about this time he became involved with a Maori girl who had come to Australia to live with her brother and was causing her brother many problems. She talked Tom into moving out of home and going to live with her in a unit which was the beginning of the end. Being able to obtain a Bond from Social Security very easily made moving out of home a simple matter and no pressure was put on either my son or his partner to find work once they were both on the dole. After completing two years of his apprenticeship (one at TAFE) and within two weeks of moving out of home he was dismissed by his employer. Then commenced several years of unemployment, living with mates, also on drugs. He stole from us his family. His father endeavoured at this stage to talk to him but all to no avail. The next few years caused a lot of grief to us as a family. There is no love as strong as a mother's love and consequently I was caught up in a co-dependency relationship, handing out money, paying for courses (supposedly). My main source of help came from my local church minister who was my lifeline. However this man went to the country and I continued to travel down the path of handing out money to keep my son out of serious trouble. By this time his father wanted no part of his son's life. The stealing continued over the years even when we had him living at home for a short time. During that time he also made 1900 phone calls to the value of \$400. At this stage I was going down hill fast as was my marriage. Our daughter contacted the North Metro drug team through St John of God Hospital at Subiaco. At this stage I was introduced to the eight week parent course. My husband attended with me which we can probably say saved our marriage. I then continued with the Parents' Supporting Parents Group which has continued to be a lifeline for me when problems have arisen. Being in a home where I cannot mention the name of Tom without altercation, The Parents' Group has been an outlet for many pent up feelings and emotions. I am still in touch with my son who is now 35 years of age and despite the fact that for several years has been employed most of the time, can fit most of his belongings in a packing case. Although his drug use seems to have abated somewhat, completely he says? He still never seems to have any money and lives his life from one day to the next. He as never attended counselling for drug use. He indicates that he would like to be reunited with the family however makes little or no effort to attain this goal. My dream is for family unity.