

## Gerry's Story – Thief

I once heard my doctor say that sugar was the gateway drug to other additions. Since I grew up equating Mom with apple pie, it was hard to turn my attitude around and think of pie as anything but wholesome.

It was true, though, that sugar made a thief out of me. I came from a nice middle class family of smokers and drinkers who held down nice jobs and raised nice children. We even had nice dogs. There was a nice little dish of coins on my father's bureau where he emptied the change from his trousers pockets every night. The only thing standing between me and what I wanted at the corner store was the nerve to pinch some of that change.

He'd never miss it, right? In those days you could get a candy bar for 5 cents. There was lots of penny candy and a big scoop ice cream cone was only 12 cents. The times I snuck out with a whole quarter I was even able to feel generous and buy bubble gum and fireballs for my friends. They took care of me too on dry days; their mom had a little dish where she saved coins for the Laundromat.

Soon enough I graduated to alcohol and cigarettes, which was no problem in my family. I fit right in. What were they going to say? There were no drunks or arguments, only nice people with habits.

I never stole anything again, but I carried guilt about my thievery into adulthood. It wasn't until I went to that doctor pre-diabetic and addicted that I realized sugar was my "gateway drug". At age 9 I had a bad combination of biochemical vulnerability, access, and a family that didn't sweat the details.

I decided to share my story at Suppers because there are so many more children now than there were then who have the lethal combination of vulnerability, access, and parents who aren't watching closely for signs of trouble.

Today, Suppers is helping me keep on track, but it's an effort that would never have been necessary if I hadn't walked through that gateway with food. I'm concerned about my children; they're probably doing sneaky stuff just like I did and will need to write about it some day. So I guess the best I can do is model the behavior and tell my story in the hope of sparing somebody else walking through that gateway to addiction and diabetes.