

Demi lovato: being an addict



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At the age of only 26, Demi Lovato is one of the most influential actress and singer of our generation. Her story about her past with substance abuse and her battle with depression came out into the light when her documentary *Simply Complicated* came out on you-tube (2017). Demi was a young woman who had a great artistic ability that continued with her adulthood and helped her develop the need for substance abuse, and even having trouble staying in the spotlight of being someone famous. Finding out what Demi reward's herself with after a new hit comes out or after a good performance will help us understand why she is the way she is.

Demi grew up in an environment characterized by uncertainty of her family relationships and an artistic talent. She began a pattern of coping responses; development of symptoms and the creation of her artistic ability. On August 20, 1992, in Dallas, Texas, Demetria Devonne Lovato, better known as Demi Lovato, was born (" Demi Lovato Biography", 2014). Demi is the second oldest of three girls to mother, Dianna Hart, formerly a Dallas Cowboys Cheerleader and country recording artist. Patrick Lovato, the father of Demi, was a guy with many troubles including substance abuse leading him to become an addict, and some mental health issues (Bueno, 2015).

Many may know of Demi from the TV show *Barney & Friends* or the movie, *Camp Rock* , where she starred as the lead female role alongside the Jonas Brothers. Demi began playing piano and guitar at an early age. As a child, growing up with divorced parents, Demi had a lot of hard times and struggled with making friends, good ones that is all because of being overweight.

Demi was clinically diagnosed with depression at a young age. Having to go through her father's alcoholic spells, her parents splitting up after abuse entered the home, and her mom remarrying (" Demi Lovato Biography, " 2014). In multiple interviews, Demi said a young girl she was obsessed with the thought of death and how it feels. She even admits to the thought of what it would be like to have her own funeral and who all would be there for her family through a time as hard as that would be. Someone who battles with depression or some other kind of psychological factor thinks of death in some way. Thinking about the possibilities of death is not something we typically see coming, especially from a young child who we believe has nothing to worry about. We do not know if Demi has been diagnosed as suicidal or that she would possibly harm herself, but we do know the history of her drug addiction. Demi has overdosed a couple times that landed her in the hospital. Demi has even checked herself into rehab after a near-death suicidal attempt in July 2018.

At the age of five, Demi and her older sister, Dallas, began modeling for fun. They did not go through a famous photographer, but they loved taking pictures and soon after they both entered beauty pageants. For the talent portion, Demi chose to sing " My Heart Will Go On' by Celine Dion, which is where it all started for her (Davis, 2017). Since that day, her mother and sister heard her sing, they knew Demi would likely do something with her life that involved music. Demi performed in many auditions for TV shows and small skits with no luck. Not until Demi got the call back for the TV show *Barney and Friends*. After her episode on Barney, Demi began working harder on acting, incorporating her music as well. After all that was a big

dream of hers, to one day become famous and the center of attention. Little did she know, all eyes would be on her. Unfortunately, not all because of her talent but because she thought too much of partying and drugs. From the mouth of a Professor at the University of Florida, psychiatry department, Dr. Scott Teitelbaum, “ Some people who become famous and get put on a pedestal begin to think of themselves differently and lose their sense of humility. And this is something you can see with addicts, too.” (McGuiness, 2012). Dr. Teitelbaum also states that because they act this way does not necessarily mean that they are this way sober, it is who they are as an addict.

Demi became a star at a young age doing TV shows and commercials. This did not help her on her way to fame, it only made things harder for her. Take Britney Spears, for example, a woman who became famous at a young age and she burned out soon because of depression and drugs (Marikar, 2007).

At a young age, Demi wanted to be like Shirley Temple someone who could act and sing (Davis, 2017). From vocal lessons to acting class, Demi was going to get there one way or another. At the age of eight, Demi learned how to play the guitar. She would then stay up all hours of the night writing music. Demi had this passion and this amazing talent she was going to use as her way of becoming a star. After *Barney and Friends* , Demi got small acting jobs for commercials and TV shows on Disney. While working through Disney, Demi met Johnny Wright, who was the music manager for the Jonas Brothers. The teenage girl got the female lead in the Disney movie Camp Rock and got to work with Johnny. This movie was Demi’s breakthrough. The movie and working with the Jonas Brothers helped get her name out there.

After the movie ended, Johnny started managing Demi as well. The next day, Demi was on tour singing with the Jonas Brothers.

Along with touring and working on her TV shows, Demi was also writing her own music alongside touring the country. That can be tough on anyone, especially someone who is only fifteen years young. Being in the spotlight also comes with deadlines for music recordings and commitment. Demi hit a wall during this time and that is where her substance abuse started to come into effect. Demi had to comply with how Disney wanted her to be viewed and she acted outside of work. A person can only live two different lives for so long before losing control of their emotions. For Demi, the only thing she could remember that made her feel somewhat like her own self-was to do drugs and drink alcohol. Addiction is a real thing and it can happen to anyone, no matter who you are. The cost of substance abuse in the United States is over \$740 billion each year. The amount of money spent annually includes crime, loss of work because of abuse, and money spent on health care (National Institute of Drug Abuse, 2017). When someone is addicted to cocaine it induces their feelings of energy and when they begin to withdrawal, it causes lethargy and depression (Foundation for a Drug-Free World, n. d.). Once addiction develops, it is hard to stop due to withdrawal symptoms. Withdrawal occurs when the body craves what it was once used to but no longer receives anymore, also known as physiological dependence. Withdrawal symptoms from the drug cocaine is followed by depression and restlessness anywhere from 7-10 days (Drug Withdrawal Symptoms, 2018). The body believes that it needs that substance to function. Cocaine is a drug that is short-lived, meaning that it hits your system almost as soon as it is

inhaled and also leaves the bloodstream rapidly. Cocaine usually comes in two forms that people are aware of; rocks, which are smoked, or powdered form which makes it easier to snort or inject into the body. To obtain a higher 'high' users know to inject or smoked it because it hits the brain at a faster rate. Like there are support groups for almost anything you can think of, there are groups for those who want to find support during their recovery from substance abuse. The craving of cocaine from withdrawal can also include suicidal ideas. These thoughts may also continue months after the stop of the drugs.

The dual response pattern Demi had, only continued with adulthood and grew stronger. She developed her art to an extreme level while also increasing the coping mechanism of substance abuse and other symptoms such as her bipolar 1 disorder.

“Simply Complicated” a documentary by Demi Lovato (2017), takes a look into her life and music career through home videos and conversations about her struggles with fame. Demi discusses her battle with her eating disorder, binge eating, and her road to becoming sober. At the age of 8 when Demi's younger sister was born, everyone's attention went to the baby. Demi struggled with this along with starting her acting career. When Lovato was 12, one of the popular girls at her school started a suicide petition to passed around the school for kids to sign it who thought Demi should consider dying by suicide. The petition was the start of a long journey ahead of her, starting with depression. After putting up with bullying for a couple years Demi requested to be homeschooled by her mother. Demi did finish her middle

school and high school years, graduated high school in 2009, from home while acting and touring the country.

According to a few online blog posts from high school peers and teachers, Demi was not the one being made fun of like she has once claimed before. Instead, Demi and her girl-friends were the ones doing all of the bullying to other students. A previous teacher of Demi's also stated: " Demi was not a very nice person to those around her" (Harkness, 2017). This information is just what a sneak peek of what others had to say about Lovato and the type of person she is. Another statement that was made about Lovato was that she had once punched one of her backup dancers. Demi's manager at the time of this incident saw it happened. Loading the bus, the morning after performing and partying, Demi stepped onto the bus and walked right towards one of her dancers, punching her in the face. To this day Demi recalls nothing of why it happened, except for the fact that it just did. Demi can blame not remembering what happened on being depressed, but it is because she was abusing drugs that night that clouds her memory from that night.

Have you ever seen the TV show the X-factor? Did you know that Demi was once a judge on the talent show? Demi judged for 2 seasons on the show until she decided she was leaving due to conflicting schedules with her music career (Harkness, 2017). It is also known that Simon Cowell, the infamous judge from American Idol and the X-Factor stated: " Demi was mean to the other judges as well as the competitors". Cowell had caught Demi on multiple occasions giving the other teams' competitors bad advice hoping they would mess up so Demi's team would win.

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Depression is the mood state of which is defined by sadness or feeling worthless (Sue, Sue, Sue, & Sue, 2017, p. 174). Over seventy percent of student's report bullying going on in their school and this percent is only increasing as the days go on (Find a Psychologist, 2018). Demi did not do much about what was going on at school and pushed it aside. Instead of asking for help she turned to food as a coping mechanism. Having something that cruel done to anyone can cause a lot of mental issues including eating habits. For Demi, that is when her eating disorder and food security started to take a toll. Food became a way out of difficult situations, Lovato thought. It made her feel better, and it eventually became a problem. Food security is more common than you think. At the end of the year, 40, 000 households respond to food security questions (The United States Department of Agriculture, 2018). Demi then became friends with a different girl who was popular in the school. The two girls had similar things in common which made them so close. Both girls had gone through their parents divorcing at a very young age. To fit in with the cool kids and to gain more friends, Demi's friend showed her the way to drugs and alcohol.

At the age of 17, while working for Disney, Demi did her first line of cocaine and from there she was addicted just like her father. In her documentary, she says the coke made her feel out of control, but she loved it. Demi said, "I guess I always searched for what my dad found in drugs because he did choose drugs over our family" (Davis, 2017). It is hard to separate environmental and genetic influences in Demi's case because both have influenced her. For example, Demi was always busy working, so she did not

have time to take care of herself which is one reason why Demi's depression worsened.

Being in the spotlight, whether it be a pro athlete, actress, or performer, allows them to have the power to make a difference in the world. They have people who look up to them, but they also have people who hate them and are willing to do whatever it takes to see you fail. The fear of disappointing someone gets to people. It gets in their head they have to be this certain person, dress a certain way, and even sing a certain way. They do this to please their fans because they do not want to let anyone down. Demi struggled with being in the spotlight. Her anxiety only increased as time went on and she wanted to be a kid again. No one can blame her because she was only in her teens at the time, and she missed out on going out with friends because she was always on tour or in the studio recording music. When she did have time to do something, she partied with her friends, just like any teenager would do, but she got back into drugs.

In 2009, Demi won a Teen Choice award for "TV Breakout Star: Female" from the show *Sonny With A Chance* which aired on TV in 2009 (Davis, 2017). This was an accomplishment she needed to keep pushing her to be the greatest actress she could be. This was only the beginning for her. As of today, Demi has been nominated for 174 awards, winning 56 of those (Acshowbiz n. d.). Demi will continue to do great things and inspire others as long as she can stay on the right track. Another album of Demi's titled *Confident* reflects on her at a point in her life where she was content with her life and the way her music was progressing (National Institute, 2017). " I

wanted to make a statement about how happy I was," Demi admitted in a press release about her album release.

Demi had anger issues and became bossy and very difficult to be around. She became manipulative to anyone she could get ahold of. While on tour, she became depressed and struggled to be herself. Demi dated Joe Jonas during the time of their tour, and their relationship hit some bumps and became difficult. Demi confided in Nick, Joe's younger brother, and it seemed maybe things would return back to normal. Unfortunately, that was not the case. A night out with friends, having fun and drinking turned into a night Demi would never forget, or in fact, one Demi would not remember. Someone in the friend group managed to get weed, and Demi had already been drinking and using Adderall that night. After leaving the hotel the next morning trashed, one person had told on Demi for using.

The response pattern that Demi has is very extreme, yet it says a lot about the nature of celebrity status when it comes to understanding problematic behavior people cope with in their difficult environment. It is believed that success is ten percent talent and ninety percent hard work. If this were true, would you think Demi is successful? Looking at the past in her life, hard work does not seem to figure into her success. Sure she worked hard at the beginning but she began to slack off and now here she is, in rehab once again. Demi was a childhood star that was slowly unraveling due to her illnesses. Narcissism is the admiration of one's self and what they bring to the table (Narcissistic Personality Disorder. (n. d.). Demi had always been told since she was a little girl that she was going to be special. She expects

special treatment from anyone and everyone around her because of her special talent.

Demi's use of drugs is all linked back to her father. Lovato's father was not in the picture as she grew up, she looked to find him because of daddy issues. Lovato's mother was abused and beaten by her father, assuming this was happening to Demi and her sister as well. Demi decided she had hit a breaking point in her life after the fall through between the Jonas Brothers and herself. She, along with the support of her family, decided to admit herself into a treatment center at the age of 18 (Davis, 2017). During this time at the center, Demi was diagnosed with bipolar 1 disorder. Bipolar 1 disorder is diagnosed by having at least one manic episode during his or her life. Most people, like Demi, who are diagnosed with bipolar 1 also suffer from depression. Sometimes a major event that brings stress can be the onset of bipolar symptoms (Sue et. al. 2017). The major event that onset symptoms of bipolar for Demi was her living two different lives. Being young but also becoming an adult at the age of eighteen pushed Demi over the edge. Demi wanted to be a kid but also had to grow up because she was doing adult things like touring the country. Being diagnosed with bipolar disorder did not come as a surprise to Demi; for her, it was more of a relief. She remembers as a kid, staying up late and even having a little bit of a manic characteristics. Bad news to some can come as good news to others who know there is something wrong and are happy to finally get answers. Individuals with a bipolar disorder have a decrease in brain activity in areas that regulate emotions. There are times when they are on their high and feel great and there are days where all the person does is sleep because

depression gets to them. Environmental and genetic factors are both influenced when it comes to a bipolar disorder. Environmental factors are factored in because of her long-term stress. Although 85% of her manic bipolar 1 disorder is genetically caused. About 1 percent of the U. S. population is affected by one of the two bipolar disorders. It is known that not every person affected by bipolar has depressive episodes, but it is common in most. Demi eventually got to the point where she did not care about her career anymore. One night while visiting her hometown, Demi got drunk with a couple of people. The next day, she had to fly to Tennessee to perform on American Idol (Davis, 2017).

Once out of the treatment center, Demi did not stop using. Instead, it only got worse. There was a point in time where Demi would go months where she did coke at least once a day. She was sneaking it onto planes and doing it behind the backs of people who cared for her. Demi's music producer became aware of what was going on and got in touch with Mike Bayer, who became Demi's sober coach. Mike is the founder and CEO of CAST Centers, which is a treatment center providing network support including doctors, psychologists, and instructors (Bayer, n. d.). Mike worked with Demi and said she was pretty much on the road to suicide. She had always had some cocaine on her at all times and there was always more than just enough for herself. There was a night where Demi locked herself in her hotel room and was used all night, she was rushed to the hospital where grabbed a bottle of pills and swallowed all of them, saying " If I'm trying to kill myself, why would you give me pills?" (Davis, 2017). She had issues, and she needed help, a lot of it. " Demi was so black and white with getting sober. One day she wanted

to get clean and the next she didn't want to talk about it", said Mike in the documentary.

After Demi had her episode, she was admitted to a psych ward in Palm Springs (Simply Complicated). This was the same treatment center that Demi's mother was admitted to due to PTSD, depression, and addiction just the year before. Demi's life coach and friends she was on tour with at the time got together and held an intervention for Demi. Phil and everyone else all agreed if she did not stop they would all walk away. Losing people that are close to her and care for her is one of Demi's biggest fears. They had all hoped this would scare her into getting sober.

Demi met Wilmer Valderrama, an actor from "That 70's Show" when she was only 17 while doing a census video back in 2010 (Davis, 2017). Wilmer was quite a bit older at the time, 29 to be exact. Once Demi turned 18, she and Wilmer began to see each other and started dating. After being together for nearly six years, they both decided to split and remain friends. The breakup was hard for Demi, not just because of the relationship ending, but because when your breakup is out in the open with the whole world, it can be a lot to deal with. (environmental factors?) Everyone is always following you and wanting to ask questions on why things ended. Six months after the breakup, Wilmer showed up at Demi's Pride Party.

At the age of 25, Demi decided to get her own house because this was the first time she had been alone. When filming the documentary, Demi was coming up on five and a half years of sobriety without relapsing. Demi still struggles with her eating disorders, bulimia and binge eating. In her

documentary, she says growing up all she did was eat because it was the only thing there for her before she got into drugs. Demi soon after got into the gym and kickboxing. Mike thought Demi trying jiu-jitsu would give her pride and the ability to have control of her mind and emotions. This activity is one you have to work hard at for a long period of time. You start at the bottom with a white belt and work your way up to the next belt. It is good to do for people who have a hard time keeping their minds off of things, especially addiction.

Demi's sixth album was released back in September of 2017, titled "Tell Me You Love Me". This album talks about her overcoming heartbreak, being a single woman, and letting go of demons in her past. One of the songs on this album talks about issues and behaviors she encountered with some of her past relationships due to her relationship with her father. In the song "Daddy Issues" Demi sings "Never enough addicted to love with the wrong one" (Oak). All the songs Demi wrote on this album are based on real-life experiences in some way or form. Being able to talk about your problems shows strength and courage. Another one of her songs off her newest album talks about men and how they converse with women (Brown, 2017). The lyrics say "I do not know why you play these games". She talks about leaving a guy on read, which means she is ignoring him and it is not on accident because he is only texting her at night after he has been drinking. She also states two can play that game. She can treat him the same way that he treats her, just so he knows how it feels. This song, like most of her new songs, are easy to relate to.

When it comes to Demi's type of a guy, she is into athletes, which is different from her past relationships, but she does not deal with the bullshitters. Over the past year, Demi has come out about her wanting to make connections with anyone. It does not matter if she finds a connection with a male or female, Demi is open to anything. She made a statement when the LGBTQ bill passed in North Carolina, saying she was going to stand now and forever for those affected by the bill, which will not allow transgender people to use public bathrooms as the gender they identify as (Kopan, 2016). Demi found this bill unfair and as seeing everyone equal, stands up for everyone's rights as Americans.

When her song " Sorry Not Sorry" was released, Demi and her producers decided to do a House Party Tour. During this, they would rent a huge house, invite fans, and give them a concert like they have never seen before. Demi relates to her fans, making her fan base really big and some of the most loyal ones out there.

After being released from the hospital, Demi checked into rehab, really wanting to work towards becoming sober. Demi focused on herself for a little bit, so she can get the help she desperately needs. Lovato needs to do this for not only herself but for her friends and family. Demi's ex, Wilmer, did visit while she was in the hospital, and he has been in some contact with her since being admitted into rehab. While trying to focus on getting sober and better, Demi has cut off all distractions, including not communicating with anyone besides family and doctors.

In recent studies, it shows that a period where there is no drug use does not treat nor decrease addiction (Brown, 2017). What a person leaves behind before entering rehab is still there when they get out. The triggers are there and relapse is easy. Tolerance to a drug can develop and disappear easily. For someone who has been sober for some time, their tolerance is lower than what it was before they relapsed. This can put your risk of overdosing at a high.

The struggle with the artistic talent, her coping responses when it comes to substance abuse and her celebrity status makes it easy for me to say that Demi is going through a lot of shit and it will only get worse from here because she does not care to take care of herself. She is following her father's footsteps and will likely die from abusing drugs just like he did 5 years ago. When will Demi learn that life is not all about being famous and being known?

Childhood trauma can cause one to become depressed and an abuser to drugs. Demi's father abused her mother before she filed for a divorce. The substance abuse and depression may have been a call for help from Lovato. The acts that she acted out could be triggered by an event such as physical or emotional abuse from her father as a child (Heim, 2017). Demi's relationship with her father Patrick Lovato was very complicated as she was growing up. In Demi's *Simply Complicated* video, Demi talks about her father being abusive. She said she was conflicted when Patrick died from cancer in 2013 (Bueno, 2015)

Research done by the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation shows there is a connection between childhood trauma and depression in adulthood. This study included 686 patients with depression who were treated with some form of therapy or medication. More than 33% of these patients concluded they had a parental loss before the age of fifteen. More than 40% physical abuse, 16% sexual abuse, and 10% neglected. This study showed that therapy helped twice as much than medication to those who were abused in their childhood. The best treatment there is for the comorbidity of depression and substance abuse is therapy and medication (The Connection, n. d.).

A family study about centered around addiction and the slight risk of it being passed down generation to generation shows that a persons' risk to becoming an addict is nearly 50% genetics (National Institute, 2017). This means that if a substance abuser has a child, that kid has a fifty percent chance of receiving the gene for becoming an abuser as an adult. For a disease like addiction, it is very complex and vary in different combinations that can add up to addiction or abuse.

Demi had a scare when she came close to dying on an overdose that happened in late July of 2018. Demi invited one of her friends over to smoke not knowing the drugs were laced (T, 2018). In an interview, the friend who supplied Demi with drugs that night said “ She knew what she was getting and she knew the risks of taking these ‘ aftermarket pills’. One of her friends became nervous, noticing Demi had not come out of her room the morning after partying hard the night before. By the time paramedics arrived, Demi was still unconscious and was rushed to the hospital in LA.

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