The New York Times

For Years, Presley Gerber Documented His Own Struggles, in His Own Words

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By Jesse McKinley

The son of Cindy Crawford, who died last month, left behind a trove of first-person testimonials about years of drug use, trying to stay clean and his mental health.



Presley Gerber, right, with his family: his sister, Kaia Gerber; his father, Rande Gerber; and his mother, the model Cindy Crawford. The Gerbers evinced an air of warmth and love – a model family, in every sense.

In late March, Presley Gerber, the son of the supermodel Cindy Crawford and the businessman Rande Gerber, posted a video on Instagram depicting what he described as "Pre Ibogaine Flood Dose," a reference to a psychedelic drug that some addicts have sworn helped them get clean.

In the post, a woman is shown using a censer to wave smoke over Gerber's body while holding a pair of feathers. And in the caption, Gerber expresses cautious hope that the treatment might alleviate what he had described as a long cycle of addiction.

"Praying it's the last time I have to come back," Gerber wrote, tagging the video #rewireyourbrain.

Gerber, 27, died on Sept. 20 at an upscale sober living facility in Santa Monica, Calif., Resolutions Living, just a day after arriving. The police in Santa Monica said soon thereafter that they were investigating the death as a "suspected overdose."

Since then, details about Gerber's final hours have been trickling out, even as the family has declined to comment beyond asking for privacy to grieve. Last week, TMZ published a short, silent video that it says shows Gerber, who worked as a model, filming himself at Resolutions the night before he died, showing off a multistory bedroom and a view of Santa Monica.

Presley began posting a sporadic series he called "Mental Health Mondays" describing in minute detail a variety of medications he says he was given throughout the years to combat his mental health challenges.

In many ways, the TMZ video was indicative of a public struggle that Gerber was having — and posting online for all to see: Beginning in early 2023, at age 23, he shared a trove of first-person videos, more than two dozen short testimonials that act as a kind of intimate personal diary, documenting his drug history and search for answers.

In a sporadic series he called "Mental Health Mondays," the videos were a sharp pivot from his previous social media output, largely glossy modeling shots and images of the good life: surfing and hanging with pop stars.

In these Monday videos, Gerber described in minute detail a variety of medications he says he was given over the years, beginning with Prozac at 14, to address what he called anxiety and intense panic attacks. "It feels like the world is ending," he recalled feeling as a young teen, "and you have no idea why."

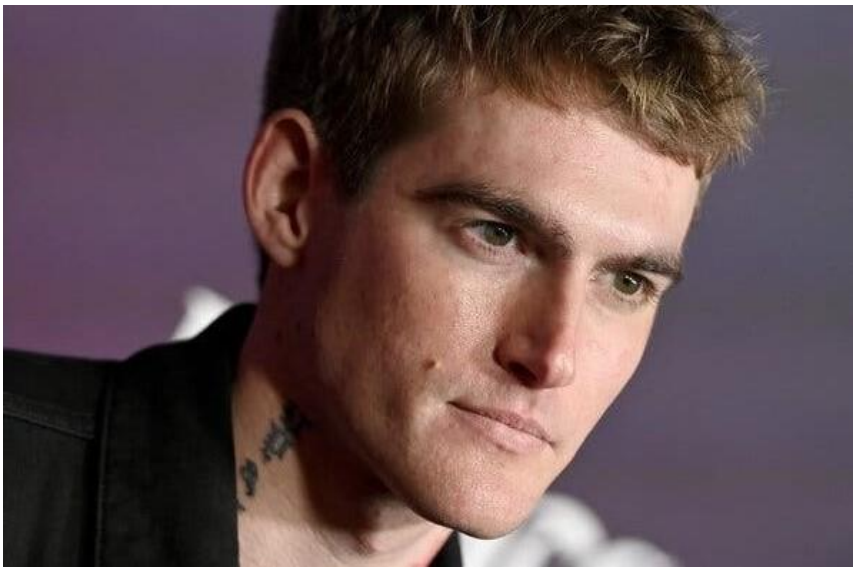
Some of the drugs he took were prescribed during a series of trips to rehab, he said, the first of which came when he was 18 or 19. Gerber also talked about using other drugs, like ketamine, to try to wean from anti-anxiety medications and antidepressants. And he mentioned using kratom, a controversial herbal supplement, to ease the pain of "withdrawals from stronger opiates."

He recalled taking Valium, Adderall and buprenorphine, which is used to treat opiate use disorder, before becoming disillusioned by both the inclination to medicate and many traditional rehab programs.

"It's a trap, and they want you in the trap — they want you in the cycle," Gerber said in an April 2025 video. Still, he added, "I believe that it is possible to heal."

The Los Angeles County medical examiner said it may take months before an exact cause of death is determined, but scrutiny of the Resolutions facility has already increased. Sober residences are not licensed by the state, but regulators are now looking into whether the facility might have been providing services that would require a state license, according to the California Department of Health Care Services. The founder of Resolutions Therapeutic Services, which operates the residence — Dr. Reza Nabavi, a psychologist — did not return requests for comment.

Like the death of the actress Hayden Panettiere, 36, from an accidental fentanyl overdose, Gerber's death at a young age devastated friends and family. But it also struck a nerve with those who did not know him, prompting parasocial tributes — and praise for his commentary — from some people who have had drug or mental health problems themselves.



"Especially in the world that I was in, there was like this kind of unspoken thing where everyone needed to be on their A game all the time," Presley said in a March 2025 video he posted on social media, adding that he hated faking happiness.

"I got out. He didn't." wrote one, Andy Lassner, a television producer and former drug user who has been sober for 27 years. "I wish he had."

FAKING HAPPINESS

Gerber, of course, is not the first famous offspring to land in the spotlight or to face a mental health crisis. But how he tried to confront it was steeped in both the world of recovery — where an honest look at your actions is considered an important step — and social media, where confessional accounts are also prized.

Heather Huszti, the chief psychologist at Rady Children's Health in Orange County, Calif., who watched some of Gerber's videos, said they seemed to offer up his own experiences to help others, while simultaneously holding himself accountable.

"He was reaching out to others to kind of say, 'Hey, these are some things that I'm thinking about or that I've done, or that I've experienced,'" said Dr. Huszti, who had not met or treated Gerber. "And that also may be reinforced for him — 'Hey, let me keep doing this.'"

Jason Nagata, an associate professor of pediatrics at University of California, San Francisco, who has studied the effects of social media on young people's mental health, said that use of online forums could "reduce stigma and help people feel less alone."

But, he added, such posts could also lead to negative comments. “Sharing something deeply personal, potentially with an enormous audience, can bring a lot of scrutiny and feedback and commentary that wouldn’t exist in a private conversation,” he said.

Raised in the wealthy environs of Malibu, Gerber’s life, chronicled online and in the press, was privileged: private jets and making pizza with Harry Styles. Home movies and photos he posted depicted a happy childhood with his younger sister, Kaia.



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His father, a nightlife entrepreneur, helped found a tequila brand, Casamigos, with his friend, the actor George Clooney, which sold for more than $700 million. Kaia is a successful model who appears on the September cover of Vogue, with a budding acting career. His mother, of course, remains a pop cultural touchstone. The Gerbers evinced an air of warmth and love — a model family, in every sense. In April, they appeared in an advertisement for Vuori, a clothing brand, smiling and laughing with each other.

Presley Gerber regularly posted loving tributes to his family, especially to his sister, and dabbled in photography with an Instagram page devoted to photos he’d taken of Kaia. But while Kaia embraced the label of “nepo baby,” Presley seemed more self-conscious about being in the public eye.

“Especially in the world that I was in, there was like this kind of unspoken thing where everyone needed to be on their A game all the time and needed to be smiling and waving and da-da-da-da,” Gerber said in a March 2025 video, adding that he hated faking happiness. “It didn’t feel authentic to me.”

Slender and tall with chiseled features and a red cross tattooed on his neck, Gerber followed his mother into her occupation, signing with the powerhouse modeling agency IMG at 15. Two years later, he had done ads for Calvin Klein and walked the runway for Dolce & Gabbana. In 2018, he appeared in a Super Bowl ad alongside his mother.

Collier Schorr, a fashion photographer and artist who has shot both of the younger Gerbers for campaigns, said that she recalled an experience of dyeing Presley's hair for a shoot and seeing a change in his demeanor.

"There was something that was freeing for him because it suddenly wasn't him," she recalled. "It was like some other character that he could just disappear into."

Gerber also talked about the trade-offs that came with modeling at such a young age. In a July 2025 reel on Instagram, he said that traveling for work led to less time for his true passions, including surfing.

"The less activity that was in my life — especially, for me, the ocean — like, the more medication I found having to be integrated into my life," he said. "And the more I just — the quality of life rapidly decreased with the decrease in natural endorphins and dopamine and that kind of stuff."



On the Dolce & Gabbana runway.

By late 2018, then 19 years old, he was arrested on a charge of driving under the influence in Beverly Hills. (He later pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor.) In early 2020, Gerber made headlines when he had the word "MISUNDERSTOOD" inked under his right eye, something he explained by saying that "you don't know how I feel" in a combative video he posted. (He later had the tattoo removed.)

Gerber recalled seeing a psychiatrist at around 13 years old. At 16, he began taking Xanax, a drug that he said had initially offered a respite until he began to wonder about its long-term effect. "I always had been aware of what dependence and addiction was," he said. "I didn't really understand that that was the direction I was necessarily heading."

Gerber first went to rehab in New York in his late teens, he said in one video, and was given trazodone, an antidepressant, which he said left him numb.

"I wasn't able to laugh," he said, "And I definitely wasn't able to cry."

He had particular worries about benzodiazepines, a class of depressants commonly known as benzos. In a 2025 video, he described being prescribed one such drug, Valium, to be taken three times a day, saying he eventually became reliant on them.

“It’s very limiting being completely dependent on any substance,” he said.

“Take care of my own mental health”

Gerber — looking gaunt — started to make his “Monday” videos in March 2023 saying that “this journey is going to last a lifetime,” though the series soon sputtered. It returned in October 2024, with a healthier-looking Presley touching on how his use of drugs had affected his life.

“In addiction, when you get older, people tend to treat you like the age that you started with your substance abuse for the rest of your life, and you’re just kind of stuck there,” he said.

In the September Vogue — published before Presley’s death — Kaia spoke about her brother’s addiction. “My parents for most of our lives were very, very private and didn’t share anything,” she said. “And now we have this absolute teacher, my brother, who says, ‘I’m gonna be very human for everyone.’”



Presley regularly posted loving tributes to his family, especially to his sister, Kaia, and dabbled in photography with an Instagram page devoted to photos he had taken of her. Of the two, Presley seemed more self-conscious about being in the public eye.

Gerber continued the weekly series for several months, but in summer 2025, the videos stopped. That November, Gerber wrote that he “had to step back and take care of my own mental health for a bit.” Last December, he posted another video — since deleted — where he outlined his “really bad” mental health struggles, and concerns about over-medication and withdrawal.

“The things that scare me,” he said, “are the things you need to take.”

In his last video, of the ibogaine treatment in March, Gerber does not appear to speak, standing as the woman waved smoke around his body.

“I faced what I had been running from, and somewhere in all of it, i started finding my way back to myself,” Gerber wrote in the caption. “We shall see.”