

A person wearing a blue and white patterned shirt is holding a brown leather suitcase. The background is a vibrant green with large, soft-edged circular shapes in varying shades of green. The text is positioned in the upper right quadrant.

Stories of recovery
from addiction:

*a wonderful
uncle*

I was aware my brother was caught up in spirals of destructive behaviour, though I thought it was a sort of social and emotional problem rather than a physical addiction. Calum was abusing sociable drugs, not ‘lonely drugs’. He was into alcohol and cocaine.

The real story began when I was six years old, when Cal was born. We were pals straight away. I loved him and he loved me. There was, and still is, a trusting bond between us. But during his chaotic drug-taking teens I was on the outside. At times we still connected well. I pretended not to notice. He would go through cycles of repentance and confession, with the whole family supporting him. Inevitably he would relapse. This happened several times.

Everything came to a head. We all lost patience with Cal. The family could do very little. His psychological state was so bad - he was so vulnerable. Just being around him was worrying. He was far removed from everyday reality, more and more out of kilter. He thought the whole world was against him. He got arrested and was sectioned. I felt relieved that there were going to be other people taking responsibility outside my family. I visited him in hospital.

Off the drugs he got better quickly, which made me realise that his altered states of mind were largely drug-induced. That was the first time it was clear to me that my brother was addicted to drugs.

Only two weeks after his section he was discharged. During his stay in hospital, and knowing he was safe, gave our family time to investigate rehab. I spent a morning on-line searching through different rehab clinics, and found an agency whose job was to direct individuals to the best programme for them. They suggested an overseas clinic, which was cheaper than a UK one. I passed on a range of options to my parents, and they investigated one of the overseas options. Cal was up for this. He chose it.

While he was away for five months we spoke on the phone. It felt weird him being so far away, but the thought that Cal was over there doing something positive with his life was reassuring. It wasn't the end of the story though, even if the crisis was over. I was still waiting to see what would happen next. The rehab offered a Twelve Step programme, and Cal really connected with it. Since returning his commitment has deepened. He's much more disciplined than older people I know. Back in Scotland, what became very important to him was honesty.

He realised while away that the heart of his problem was dishonesty towards himself and others. I felt heartened by this. Even when applying for jobs he was reluctant to play himself up, like most of us do. Cal was very low key for a while. It didn't do him any harm. I have no worries about him now. He found work, and he's stayed connected to the Twelve Step programme. He's been helping others and taking leadership in his community of support.

Even though I know living his life with addiction won't be easy, I trust him to live it well with integrity and enjoyment. And now he wants to offer me support too. He calls me as much as I call him. And when we chat, he makes a point of asking me how I am. This threw me at first. I've had to relearn how to be with my brother.

Now that he's an uncle to my own son I expect to see a lot more of him. I no longer need to take care of Cal. We care for each other and enjoy being together. We really love each other, always have. He's a wonderful guy!

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You can read other stories
of recovery from addictions at
www.storiesofrecovery.org.uk

Thank you to the participants who were kind
enough to share their recovery stories for the
greater good.

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