

Stories of recovery
from addiction:

*free
spirit*



At the age of 11 I tried my first joint. I began to drink at the age of 13. Drink made me feel what I had never felt naturally - confident and no longer full of fear. Drink made me feel invincible. I was to carry on drinking for the next 20 years. Over those years I switched from one drug to another. My whole life revolved around drink and drugs. I lost jobs, friends and family and near the end of my drug taking I lost my self-respect and the will to live.

My wake-up call came when someone asked me if I self-harmed. I was taken aback: of course I didn't! The woman who asked me that silly question just gave me a knowing look, as if to say, 'Yeah, right'. She told me, 'of course you self-harm, why else would you fill yourself up with chemicals, and take pills off people without even checking them. That is self-harming.' It was as if I had suddenly seen the light and I went to the Health Clinic and asked for help. I was referred to a local community addiction team. I had never tried rehab and never met anyone who had tried such a programme. I found it really hard to begin with but the longer I stayed off drugs and alcohol, the clearer my head and thinking became.

I made new friends, all clean and sober people, and learned how they recovered. It was a journey that changed my life.

I just try to focus clearly on my journey at the moment. I've had a few relapses and used to beat myself up about it but now I realise I'm only human. After all saints have got pasts and sinners have got a future! It was important for me to change my acquaintances. Now I'm only interested in people with positive mental attitudes, people with a good take on life; after all, they say 'like attracts like.'

Today I'm healthy, confident and a free spirit. I started going to the gym, taking swimming lessons and I ran a 5K. This was unforgettable - what an atmosphere - and when I saw the finishing line it was an amazing buzz, better than any high from drink or drugs. Small things amaze me, like waking up in the morning not having to worry about where I will get my next fix, going to the shops and buying things like clothes and hair products, things that make me feel and look better. It's all brilliant.

People are telling me I'm looking great, and that's got my self-confidence and self-esteem away up high. Even better, my elderly mother notices big changes, especially in my attitude. That makes me feel better too.

I never dreamed that life could be so good. I have my friends and family back in my life. I've signed up for a college course. Things have happened and are happening now that were beyond my wildest dreams! Happiness is no longer an illusion.

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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 stories for the greater good.

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the project.



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