



Stories of recovery from addiction:

*guidance
from the
grave*

From thirteen I had a liking to lose myself in oblivion. This turned into obsession and compulsion to use drugs. Dealing and using everyday, all day, my addiction became progressively worse. Before I used drugs I was honest and never stole. I mastered the art of stealing out my parents bank account without getting caught. Charged with possession, I was lucky it was not intent to supply. My considerable football talent diminished. I under achieved at school. Up to twenty two my life was ravaged by drugs. When things got really bad, I managed a little clean time but to stay clean by myself was impossible.

The consequences were enormous. I lost all ambition. I was in a self destructive whirlwind, working sporadically in dead end jobs. It got to the point that my parents, frightened of what could happen to me, bailed me out of whatever debt I was in. This became a weekly thing and once exceeded £1000.

At twenty-one I went through a drug induced psychosis. I was terrified and paranoid. I tried to attack someone who meant me no harm... I was sectioned, taken by helicopter to hospital, where I was put on a blood drip for 10 days. Were it not for the NHS I could have died. Luckily, I got off my section after a couple of weeks, but chose to stay in hospital another week until I left for a rehab. Sadly, staying in a mental hospital was the safest place for me.

Rehab was hard going but a new beginning. Removed from the drug circles, I picked up some clean time, started to understand what I suffered from. My self-esteem nil, I was in a spiritual void. When I left rehab, although I had some awareness, I was a long way from recovery. When I got home I was lost and isolated with no self-confidence. I did not want to use but I couldn't handle dealing with life, clean. I went to a counsellor who encouraged me to write a journal. I think a turning point was when I realised I was lying to myself even in my writing (I now know that honesty is the first principle of recovery).

One night I went for a long walk passed the house where I grew up. It felt like I was being guided; I went to my sister's grave, promised her and God I would be honest from now on. And drug free. I walked by a sign: "Thistle" and knew one day I'd work for the Thistle Foundation

(promotes an inclusive society for disabled people). I got myself to a self-help group just before an inevitable relapse, started attending everyday, and doing volunteer work, poster campaigns, hospital visits, etc. My life began to transform. I felt good about myself and I felt part of society. I took on responsibilities. My confidence grew. I could interact with people, instead of dreading contact. Connecting with people was a revelation, rekindling my spirit!

Enjoying life, I looked for a job. I went for an interview with the local council. Despite my previous difficulties (that I was able to be honest about), I got the job. I'm now a learning assistant for youngsters with disabilities and I love it! It is the first time in my life that I have actually got pleasure out of working.

It is not only me who is reaping the rewards of recovery. My mother, who used to worry that I would end up dead or in jail, now glows when she sees me. Her eyes light up. When she thinks of me now, she thinks happy thoughts. I'm no longer a thorn in my family's side. I'm now a positive influence for my family – instead of a destructive ripple.

For years me and my brother fought viciously. While I was using, we hated each other. Now we enjoy being together. No longer tangled with resentment, we go to the football again. When I used to think of my departed sister I would feel a massive amount of shame, wondering what she would think of me if she were here and also wondering if she somehow could still see me. I believe that she does and that she is now proud of me.

I have a realistic hope that never used to be there: to meet a lovely woman and raise a family. I want to carry on working with youngsters and further myself with more experience and qualifications. I hope to visit my uncle in Australia and travel to New York and meet cousins for the first time. I am twenty three years old; I've been clean for twenty months and I have no doubt that I am going to stay clean today.

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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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