



Stories of recovery
from addiction:

learning to fly

I noticed my son's behaviour becoming extreme. He started being verbally abusive in an extremely strong way. At the time I just couldn't work out where this was coming from, but in retrospect I know it happened when he was coming down from the effects of drugs. It should have been obvious to me as I'd had some drugs worker training. Because he was my son I just didn't consider this at all. I knew that he had probably used cocaine with his friends - it was an accepted part of their scene - but I couldn't be certain. Eventually he told me that he was taking crack-cocaine and that he'd been using it since he was 16. I had no idea. I hadn't even heard of it! To think he was on a drug that I didn't even know existed. That was a shock.

I was surprised at how long he had managed to keep it from me. He was deeply ashamed of his drug use and he wanted to keep it private - from me - from everyone. He split up with his girlfriend, and went away travelling for six months to try and get himself off the crack. I loaned him the money for this. He took up paragliding, learned to fly, and he came back healthy and off the crack. He was like a different person. Healthy, confident, clean, and

proud he'd managed to quit it. He got back together with his ex. Sadly though, he was soon using crack again every weekend. Whenever he got together with his mates, they'd get drunk and end the evening taking crack. Again we all had to put up with the fights and awful abuse when he was coming down. Inevitably he and his girlfriend split up again.

On the first date with his next girlfriend he told her he was a crack addict, and she said that she didn't care. Meaning, I think, that she would accept him no matter what. They had a child together and it's through her and their life together that he has managed to stop taking crack. It wasn't easy though.

I suggested that he go to a GP and see what services there were on offer, but he didn't want there to be a record of it. His girlfriend had made him promise to quit, but when he slipped up and used again he was very honest with her and always told her. This created awful scenes between them, dreadful rows and fights, when he would turn nasty. He'd go out with his mates and the next day he'd take it out on the people closest to him, being really caustic. When I was round babysitting for them, I'd see him turn into a monster.

Coming off the crack has been gradual. He used the paragliding and flies every chance he gets. I think it is addictive too. He tried psychotherapy sessions in anger management, but reckoned that he could have got more from reading a book about it. He tried acupuncture a few times too, and thought this was OK because he felt good physically after treatments.

Just lately we have been able to talk, adult to adult. It's much better than before. I've mentioned how bad things had been for me. I'd been seeing a counsellor who made me realise just how much I'd been affected. I tended to get ill every time we had been in the middle of one of the traumas. I would develop a cold or flu, and it became obvious eventually that the two things were linked. Drug abuse does so much damage to everyone around the addict. I didn't realise how huge the burden I'd been carrying was, until I felt sure that he had beaten the addiction. Only then, as we all became more certain that he was recovering and staying off, could I admit what I had been going through.

He has come such a long way from a really messy life, taking all sorts of drugs. He and his partner have turned into different people, working so hard to sort themselves out and grow up, and make a good home for their child. They have made a tremendous effort to make things better. He's shown a great deal of will power, has a decent job, and has been off the crack for over 6 months now. At last he listens to what I have to say. That's how I know he's OK and the breakthrough has come.

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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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