

Stories of recovery  
from addiction:

# *summer party*



**A**n opportunity came up for me to go on holiday to Ireland and stay for a month in the countryside. I wasn't too keen to go at first because I knew that I couldn't get enough methadone to last me but then decided that I would probably be able to acquire some while I was there. So I went, taking my bottle of methadone with me. It ran out after about 10 days and I went to several doctors to try and get more. They all refused to give me any, and advised me to go back home and get my prescription from my own GP. I could have come back home and got re-prescribed but at that point I realised that it wasn't my best option. I remember writing to my mother and trying to explain myself, apologise for everything I'd put the family through. I realised that if I managed to stop, it would be great for my mum, and that was a bonus. But I stopped for myself - you have to, not because the government is telling you to, or your family are hassling you or your girlfriend wants you to; you don't stop for other people's benefit. I had to stop for me.

When my bottle was finished, I was ill. The usual withdrawal symptoms: inability to sleep, cramps, leg pains, feeling spaced out, no energy whatsoever, feeling incredibly weak, the dreaded cold shivers - just everything that goes along with withdrawal from opiates, only with methadone it's more intense and longer lasting. But I kept active and busy. I didn't just lie down in a bed for three weeks. I was doing stuff, like going out and getting wood, gardening, tidying the house, cooking, making tapes . . . in fact, I think what really saved me was making tapes! It was pre- MP3 days, I had a load of cd's with me, and I would weld tapes together from all these tunes that I had. I was obsessive about getting the right edits and this somehow became the project that I sunk a lot of energy into. You know, I still have those tapes today! I was trying to keep busy, keep myself totally occupied, which is really difficult when you have no energy, but I somehow found it and kept myself going. My friends were very sympathetic to my state.

At a midsummer party I'd been invited to, I stayed up late into the night and I knew that I'd broken the back of my addiction: I'd reached the peak of the withdrawal and physically I was going to be on the mend. I knew that I had arrived at the critical point and that it was going to be easier from then on. Slowly the methadone was washing out my system.

Symbolically, I got myself tattooed while I was there, on my arm. It's a green mandala, the green to remind me of my methadone addiction. It was a ritual, a testament to my achievement. I thought, I'm going to mark myself after my experience and it's to be symbolic of change. I thought, if I ever look at my arm to shoot up again I have to look at that tattoo and it is there to remind me of what I have gone through. I still have all the scars and marks from the needles and the abscesses on my arm, my battle scars, but they are fading. I still have my tattoo and I don't have my habit.

When I came home, I knew what a tremendous battle I'd fought to get off my addiction. It was a seriously difficult thing to have done and now I had too much to lose to ever go back.

My life has been transformed. What keeps me on the straight and narrow is the fact that I can look in the mirror and I've got my self-respect back. I'm not covered in boils and abscesses any more. I've got my intellect back, I'm interested in art, in music; I've taught myself photography and photoshop. These are things I certainly wouldn't have been able to do while I was using!

I've got my dignity back and my freedom, things that I thought I would never have again, but I have.

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You can read other stories  
of recovery from addictions at  
**[www.storiesofrecovery.org.uk](http://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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