



Stories of recovery
from addiction:

*that's how
it works*

Recovery for me has been a slow and painful process. Many small deaths and shedding of skins – ripping apart years of misery and despair. I was like a well worn fleece never washed for fear of losing its heat. Why bother with pain and slowness when oblivion can be bought in your local supermarket for the price of a good pound of mince? I unwittingly used unpleasant childhood memories to fuel my alcohol and drug addiction.

When I started in recovery, this had to stop. I was very much a person who could not mix well with people without feeling self-conscious and shy. I was the kind of person who stumbled through life wearing a suit of armour which constantly clanged in my ear and was difficult to manoeuvre in. My life was a rapid succession of jobs and relationships with minimal care and commitment. I believed I had been emotionally disabled as a child and this was the reason I could not sustain anything. Drink and drugs had been my only constant providing me with an emotional landscape where I could operate and breathe. Since meeting other people in recovery, I've learned that an abusive childhood does not automatically lead to addiction. Many I've met in recovery, were loved and nurtured and were high achievers in school.

A moment of clarity came to me one night, when coming out of a drunken stupor, I realised that death, which I hoped for on a daily basis, was not going to come to me quickly. I saw many years of pain and torture in front of me, and realised that I wanted to live and reach the potential we are all born with before I died. I went to my doctor who referred me to an alcohol counsellor, who, after a few weeks, got me into hospital to detox for ten days. The hospital took care of my physical body but there was no counselling offered during my stay and in a matter of weeks I was back to drink and drugs.

I didn't know how else to live; I'd never known any other way of living. Another year of torture passed. I truly believed no-one could help me and a horrific alcoholic death would be the only legacy I would leave to my children. One night, while I was out, I saw an advertisement on a bus which read, "Is alcohol costing you more than money?" At that moment Alcoholics Anonymous came into my life. I had always thought that alcoholics were those down and outs; old men wandering the streets talking to themselves, while scouring bins for food and fag ends.

How naïve I was.

I live a very clean and sober life these days. Slowly but surely I am learning to live without the intoxication effect of drink and drugs. My mind does not race to an invisible finishing line at 100mph. I am free of sticky worry that clogs my brain, and I am now capable of rational thought. I have relapsed on occasion. This can happen, but I just pick myself up. Once recently when I've thought about having a drink; instead I had a long, hot shower until the physical craving passed, then cooked myself a nice meal! There are many people in AA who I can turn to. They understand exactly what I'm talking about because they have been to the same places in the mind that I have been and are able to guide me out of those dark nooks and crannies. They show me how to use the emotional tools handed down to them from the folk who've gone before. I, in my turn, am able to do the same for others coming through the door. That's how it works.

I am learning social skills which I needed to be drunk to carry out before, like interacting with people on a level that is honest and not fraught with anxiety and dread. I understand that I'm just me, not someone who is there to entertain, amuse or even like. I open up my day when I open my curtains and full stop it with the close of curtains. Routine and rhythm give substance to my life,

creating boundaries and discipline, which in turn gives me a framework to live within.

I don't know the damage my illness has caused my children, but I don't see or hear any strain in their faces or voice any more and there's an easy love and affection between us which shows itself often in small ways. I am grateful for what I don't have in my life today. Today I feel alive.

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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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