



Stories of recovery  
from addiction:

# *doing it for me*

**I** t was nine years ago that my recovery began. I drank from morning to night but I didn't realise I had a problem until I didn't have a drink for two weeks. I went through the DTs. My husband took me to the hospital. When they took blood they told me I had alcohol withdrawal still affecting my system, even though I hadn't had any in two weeks. I argued with the doctor, 'no, I've not had a drink for two weeks'. That's when it hit me: 'here, I'm an alcoholic'.

I didn't want to admit I had a problem. For five years, that was my life, drinking getting detoxed, getting into jail. I just woke up one morning and said to myself, I don't want this life any more. I went to see my doctor and he put me on Antabuse pills, the ones that make you sick if you drink alcohol. It was then I really came off drink. After a few years, I felt I didn't need them, so my doctor weaned me off gradually.

I still have panic attacks, even though I don't drink, but now I know what's happening to me. Before, if I got one, I'd just be a total mess and tell myself I needed a drink to calm down. I didn't know what was happening. I don't let it frighten me now. I sit down, and I tell myself to stay in control, do my breathing exercises, and stay calm.

I attended hospital as an outpatient every day for five weeks. I went through counselling and they taught me how to cope with my panic attacks. They were really good up there. I'm on anti-depressants as well, and I think that helps me cope with things.

What keeps me from drinking is not wanting to drink. I don't want a drink. I don't want to be the way I was. People say they're giving it up for this or that reason. I'm doing it for me, because I don't want to have that horrible feeling again, when my hand was shaking so badly I couldn't hold a pen. I want to wake up in the morning, knowing that I can go out and not have to hide in the house. I don't want to wake up in a police cell, thinking, what am I doing here? That was like being in a living nightmare. Now I can wake up in the morning and remember what I've done.

Before, if a debt man came to the door, I wouldn't open it. I'd be sitting there, with no gas, or electricity - I wouldn't care, as long as I had my drink. Now, I'm more conscientious about my bills. I think, I need to get that paid. I'm not feart to open the door, and show them that I've got a telly licence and I've paid my electricity bill. It feels good being able to do that. I can open my blinds and my windows, whereas before I was like a vampire:

I lived in the dark. Now, I'm letting the light in.

I was killing myself with the drink. My liver was damaged, inflamed. Now, I don't need to worry about my liver.

What's really helped is going to my women's group. It feels like coming into my own house. I've been going every week for seven years. I tried one or two other groups, but I didn't feel as comfortable in them. At this group nobody judges you. I've done lots of things with them: keep fit, computing, storytelling, reading groups. Now I help with the new women coming in and that makes me feel good, being able to help someone who's just starting to recover from alcohol, because I've been there myself.

Now I can go on holiday. I could have gone on holiday years ago, the money I spent on drink. Last year I went to Turkey for two weeks; before I wouldn't even have had my bus fare to the shopping centre.

I love that feeling I get inside now, happy and relaxed - just a good feeling, living life, really. My confidence has grown. I can deal with life and try new things and I'm able to watch my grandweans growing up. I want to live my life and see them enjoying theirs.

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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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