

A close-up photograph of a woman's face, focusing on her eyes and the top of her head. She is wearing a light-colored straw cowboy hat with a wide brim. The hat's band is decorated with several rows of beads, including large, light-colored cylindrical beads and smaller, darker round beads. Her eyes are looking upwards and to the right. The background is a solid, vibrant red color with some faint, overlapping circular shapes in a lighter shade of red.

Stories of recovery
from addiction:

*enjoying
life*

I t starts at school, the older boys selling drugs to the younger ones. Right from twelve, my boy was constantly in trouble. Stealing, violence and drugs. By sixteen he was taking heroin, and jail became his first home. He nearly died after a brutal stabbing, all over drugs. I hadn't a clue about drugs. That's when my daughter sat me down and told me what heroin was, what drug dealers and gangsters were. I thought this just happened on television. I couldn't believe what my family were being dragged into.

When I found the silver paper and needles in the house that's when reality hit. So much friction in the house between us all. My son was stealing from us, from neighbours, stealing cars, breaking into houses, and in and out of prison for years.

I really couldn't tell you how I coped. I suppose that's why I drank too much. I was binge drinking at weekends. My husband was an alcoholic and he died when he was fifty -cirrhosis of the liver. That Christmas after he died I knew that I had to live. I said to my mother and my sisters, "This is my last drink and my last cigarette", and it was.

I packed them both in and I've never smoked or drunk since. I did comfort eat and put a bit of weight on, but nothing too drastic.

I talked to my family about the boys, which isn't always a good thing. There ends up being tittle tattle and criticism. That's why you are better off going to family support groups, but that came later.

My two sons and grandson were all in the house one day, taking heroin. One of my boys overdosed and died there and then. I was at my husband's grave at the time, and when I got home they were waiting to tell me. It wasn't the first time he had overdosed but this time he died. My daughter was there for me, and family too. It's just a blank. I don't know how I coped. I never understood why they used heroin, wanting to be part of the crowd I suppose.

My other son was using drugs daily and stealing to pay for them. He drank a lot. Then, and I still don't know how, the miracle happened. He decided he was getting off everything. He had to get his methadone right down and then he was allowed into rehab. His social worker and a lovely nurse helped him get through the detox, and that was him off the drink and drugs.

He moved into supported accommodation, and that's almost two years that he's been clean. He's at college now. I'm very proud that he's done that. His nature is so different, he's absolutely brilliant.

Through family-group support I have got better myself. A Doctor gave me the number and I must have hung on to that number for about a week, thinking, "I don't know what this is about". Then I phoned it and spoke to a wonderful woman. She phoned me right back and spoke to me for over an hour. Then she picked me up and took me to the group. I went nearly every week. What was said in that room stayed in the room. We told our stories and could cry openly. Complete strangers - but we all shared similar stories. I would recommend it to everybody who has been in this situation. It's been tremendous for me going to these groups. Through them I joined line dancing and have never looked back. I go twice a week, and away for dancing weekends. We try to learn a new dance every week, its brilliant. My teacher tells the group not to follow me, what a laugh! So between my weekends away and line dancing, I'm enjoying life again. I never would have thought I'd get my life back. I came through it.

I go to a bereavement group as well. We tell each other our stories. It can be painful, but those people are the one's who really understand what you've been through. There is a hypnotherapist who gives you sessions through family support. This has been great, and helped me to cope with anger issues.

We can go for aromatherapy and facials as part of the service too. I had a facial yesterday. It smoothes away the wrinkles and worry lines. I mean look at me, do I look like a pensioner?!!

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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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alcohol use), Snfad (Scottish network for families
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