

Stories of recovery from addiction:

# *fast track*



**I had bulimia, and so I was tired all the time and had low self-esteem. I ended up replacing the bulimia with speed. Initially I enjoyed it but towards the end, I'd had enough of the lifestyle, enough of living a lie. I felt quite anxious and fraught. I was living off my nerves. I wasn't sleeping properly and I wasn't eating properly either.**

Most of my friends were taking drugs at the weekend, but they didn't know that I was still taking speed through the week. I grew sick and tired of that and pined for a completely different life, one that didn't involve drinking, drugs, and staying up all weekend. I didn't know how to get out of the situation because everyone I knew had this lifestyle.

I decided I'd had enough. I would try giving up speed as I was always on edge. I'd become ratty and moody and I felt that I wasn't a very nice person. Because I'd read a lot about coming off, I knew there was a possibility of psychosis and depression and I was scared of that and of my bulimia coming back. I had also read that exercise can help with some of the things like low self-esteem and depression.

The first month was OK, and then I realised that I was probably going to hit a wall. I hated the thought of just letting myself get depressed. So I started to run, which was absolutely hellish at first. People always talked about the endorphins you get at the end of a run, where you feel high, but I felt nothing for a while. However, I didn't give up when things were at their worst. Even though the journey was going to be hard, I realised it was time-limited and that I would feel better at the end of it. I knew that because I had created this monster, I could also get rid of it. I thought, I'll work towards something, and so I decided to enter the women's 10km.

Eventually I did start to notice the difference that running made. I was running 3 times a week. Some days, because I was feeling so low, it felt like the most difficult thing to motivate myself, but I also knew that it was helping me inside. So I joined a running club to help motivate me. I ran with them once a week.

It took about a year and half for the depression to lift. I did start to notice the mental health benefits. I got more excited at the end of runs. Instead of lying in my bed not wanting to get up, they gave me more energy and more clarity.

I still run, 4 or 5 times a week. I did my first half-marathon. If someone had said to me a couple of years ago, you're going to finish a half-marathon, I'd have laughed in their face, but I remember crossing the line and it being the most amazing high that I'd ever had, and it lasted for days. I felt like I was floating a foot above the ground, which was better than any high that I'd got from a drug. That was September 2005.

When I was taking drugs I felt like I'd lost a lot of my interests. My folks are from the countryside and I'd always loved nature. I got back into hillwalking. I hadn't lost any of those loves, they'd just gone missing for a while. With the company and support of a few good friends and new ones I'd made along the way, through the running club, I re-kindled my passion in nature.

I do volunteer work now with the Woodlands Trust for a couple of weeks each year. It's in a Caledonian forest in the north of Scotland. My job is to welcome visitors, identify trees and what wildlife they might see and then send them on their way. If I think back to how things were 7 or 8 years ago, I would never have thought that I was capable of doing that.

My bulimia never came back. I think the running helped me get over all that, by improving my self-esteem and confidence. During the summer I try to go out hillwalking most weekends. I go camping, I cycle a lot, go to gigs and listen to music at home to relax. I think, because I had this lost period, I appreciate life more now. I embrace life, I'm a better person to be around and happier in myself.

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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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