

Stories of recovery
from addiction:

*father
knows*



For a number of years my drinking was really getting out of hand. I tried plenty of times to stop drinking and I would do fairly well, stay off for a few weeks and then congratulate myself and celebrate my success with a wee treat, that is one drink, which always led to another and then to more until I was back to square one, stashing my bottles away somewhere in the house. For years this pattern of start-stop drinking went on repeating itself. My work began to deteriorate. All my workmates could see it but nobody ever took me aside and spoke about it. I have so much regret about this. I wrecked a wonderful career. It could have been different if only I had been encouraged to take time out and get the help I needed, but instead I was edged out, made redundant, and in hindsight I can see it was because of my drinking.

Eventually my partner got sick and tired of it and called my dad and told him there was a problem. He arranged to come and visit us on a cleverly disguised Christmas shopping trip. I will always remember how, as we sat at breakfast together, drinking tea, he said, 'I know you have been drinking a lot and it's becoming a problem'.

The blood drained from my head: it was the most dreadful moment of my life. I look up to my father and have so much respect for him. He wanted me to come home with him and join an AA group but at the time I had a negative opinion of AA. I thought they were just a bunch of sad losers.

I decided not to return to my family home with my father but instead joined a community-based rehab in my own home town. During the first couple of days I was scared out of my mind, but I soon realised that most of my fear was just in my head. I had stopped drinking completely and was beginning to go through withdrawal and detox. I was hot, sweaty and uptight. The group work during the first week was so hard for me. I got up a couple of times and walked out. It was very difficult for me to open up at first but then I began to mellow out a bit and to find the groups very worthwhile.

My keyworker encouraged me to go to an AA meeting and came along with me to the first one. I left that first meeting crying my eyes out, taking everything home with me. I was too emotional. I kept on going to meetings and learned to filter out the sad and negative stories. I've learned how to just focus on the things which I find positive and helpful to me. I look forward to meetings.

Sometimes I feel I have to take my mind away from what's bothering me, like an emotion, and in the past I would have done this by going for a drink but now I've worked out other ways to cope with these feelings - like watching something on the TV, or taking the dog out for a walk, anything, so long as I am filling my mind with something else. I find being outside in a park, surrounded by nature, the best distraction. I'm always looking for healthy ways to have fun, like going out to the theatre or the cinema, or going to a museum or art gallery.

I started work in a call centre for a while but it felt as if my head was going to burst and sent me into a relapse. I've realised that I need to get out and about, not be office-bound, so not every kind of job is going to work for me. I'm just starting some charity work and I think the variety in the working day is going to suit me well.

My last big test came at a family gathering. I wanted to buy a pint and put it on the table in front of me just so that if anyone came up and asked me if I wanted a drink, I could point to my pint and say 'no thanks, I've got one', but my Father didn't think that was a good idea. He bought me a pint of Lucozade and it was absolutely fine, no one even noticed that I wasn't drinking alcohol.

So I am feeling an awful lot better about myself, I'm getting some confidence back. I'm looking for a job working with people, a career that will fit in with me that I will enjoy, not confined to a desk, with variety and new challenges everyday. At last I can say that I am finally re-inventing me and it feels good.

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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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