



Stories of recovery
from addiction:

*my
revolution*

I started drinking when I was 13. I remember getting caught out, one Saturday, in the local pub. The person sitting next to me leaned over and said, ‘did I not just see you arguing with the bus driver for a child fare?’ I was a weekend drinker for a long time and my dependency grew at a menacingly slow rate. I didn’t realise when I had crossed all the invisible lines: drinking regularly throughout the week, having blackouts.

Being a fairly high functioning addict, I have always worked, was married, kept a nice house. I gained a degree in Scottish history as a mature student and went on to work in social work (no easy task being working class, dyslexic and female).

However, by my late 30s my marriage had ended, and my life was on a downward spiral. So when I woke up from a blackout, in hospital, I was never able to answer my niece’s question, ‘Auntie Mari, why did you jump out the window?’ With my spine broken in 2 places and my heel smashed, I finally admitted to myself I had a problem with alcohol.

My initial diagnosis: paralysed from the waist down and not expected to walk again. I prayed that if I could regain the use of my legs I would strive to be a good socialist and would never drink again.

Shortly after, I began to feel movement in my wee toe. With daily workouts, alongside my physiotherapist, I began to walk again.

Whilst in hospital I sought help from Alcoholics Anonymous and was visited on a regular basis by their health liaison officer. He brought me literature, listened and shared his own experiences. Talking to someone who had been on a similar journey really helped. When I was fit enough to get into a wheelchair, he took me to local AA meetings. I started to have hope that life was going to be worth living. I go on my own now, once a week. I have a sponsor who supports me, one-to-one, and is helping me through the 12-step recovery programme. I feel safe at an AA meeting, safe to talk though my emotions and fears.

I’ll never know if it was due to the power of positive thought, hard work and determination, sheer luck, or a miracle, that I began to walk again. However, I decided to keep my word about the socialism and the drinking. Just after getting released from hospital, I walked, several miles, across the city on an anti-war demo with the aid of my crutches and a lot of will power. It was also my first sober demo. I have never touched a drop of alcohol since. That’s four years I’ve been sober.

It's not been easy. I had to come to terms with being permanently disabled, and in constant pain, whilst sober! I've had to learn how to take care of myself, physically, mentally and spiritually. I took anti-depressants for a while but my psychiatrist took me off them, as he reckoned I didn't need them any more. Both my psychiatrist and my addiction worker have been great. They've taught me how to look at life more positively.

I keep myself in a positive frame of mind by keeping a nice tidy house. I'm good at DIY and interior design. Although, admittedly, I may have overdone it with the fablon! I've recently got into planting seeds and growing my own lettuce, carrots, potatoes and herbs. Physically, I have to constantly watch out that I don't overdo things. It's hard to accept that I can't do the things I used to. It's all about balance - not too little, not too much.

I used to be a chef so I'm looking forward to cooking with my home-grown veggies. I do all my boiling, frying and baking on a Sunday and then freeze the food, so I've got meals ready for all the rest of the week. I eat a lot more healthily now.

My family has given me a lot of love and support through this, but my friends from the old days of going on demo's or straight to the pub after work are gone.

I had to leave them behind. I've got new friends now, that I met through music, at a gig. Music is one of my positive new coping mechanisms. It makes me feel good. I put some Alabama 3 on full blast and I get my exercises and housework done. I sing with my friends most Saturdays. It relaxes me and I forget all my worries. Sometimes I dance around the living room. My hips get the best workout, my heart is bursting with joy and I'm not high on spirits, but my spirits are most definitely high!

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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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