



Stories of recovery
from addiction:

*off
everything*

In the early 90's Mat and his friends were going to raves. I guessed that he was taking something, but he said it was just hash. His dad and I weren't very educated about drugs. People told us hash was OK, so we thought it must be. But looking back I should have known that Mat was on heroin because his looks had gone. He had become so thin and moody, and really angry.

Then we found out Mat was smoking heroin. Stupidly I thought that because he wasn't injecting it he would get off it quicker. At this point I started reading up about it. But meanwhile it was destroying our family. James his dad would get home from work and ask what was happening, but by now I was keeping a lot back from him. Mat had actually been in jail a couple of times, having been caught with ecstasy tablets. It was bad enough that I was hurting. I didn't want anyone else in the family to be hurting as much. One of my friend's sons was also taking drugs, so she and I could talk about our experiences together. For some strange reason, maybe it's just a mother thing, I kept saying to myself, "well, Mat's not as bad as her boy", which made me feel better within myself.

The next thing I knew we got a phone call saying he'd been caught with £30,000 worth of ecstasy. This was absolutely horrific for us - the shame drugs bring. I thought everybody would know now. He was given six years. We visited him regularly in prison: his brother, sister, uncles and aunties. The whole family gave him support.

When he got out he moved back in with us. He'd been in prison three and a half years and had been dabbling all the time he was inside. His brother took him to a drug support agency and they suggested a methadone programme. Mat said there was no point taking methadone. He'd been using it on and off all the time he was on drugs, and believed it was harder to get off than heroin. He said he wanted to be off everything.

He went into rehab for six months. When he came out he was looking great but within another six months he was using again. I couldn't believe it. How long could this go on? My daughter was in tears almost constantly, because she knew he was injecting. The thought of me finding him dead was just too horrific.

There were horrible confrontations between everybody. Then one night there was a big fight, and his father told him to get out and never come back. I was heartbroken. I said to my husband, "If Mat dies on the street, I'll never forgive you." My other son urged with me not to put his dad under pressure - it was Mat who was the cause of all this unhappiness. After a couple of days Mat came back an absolute wreck. We sat and looked on the internet together and found a hospital in London which treated addicts with Naltrexone. He needed to be tested every day for two weeks to make sure his body was free from drugs.

We got him back into rehab and he succeeded in getting off heroin. He has never looked back, and has been off all drugs for three years. As he says, coming off drugs can be done, but it is the help you need after that is crucial to staying off.

I joined a family support group and went on a counselling course. Mat took the counselling course too. I knew it would be good for him because you find out so much about yourself. We paid for him to do it and it has helped him get work in addiction support. My friend and I also started our own support group. We wanted to be able to advise people and let them know how drug addiction had affected our lives. I knew that tough love had worked for Mat - such as when his dad put him out on the street - but I realise this isn't right for everybody. Some kids don't make it. I'm lucky that my boy did.

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You can read other stories
of recovery from addictions at
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Thank you to the participants who were kind
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