

# RECOVERY STORIES



AS WRITTEN BY FIRST CLIENTS,  
PAST AND PRESENT TO EXPRESS  
THEIR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS  
ABOUT THEIR OWN RECOVERY JOURNEYS



# C O N T E N T S

**Calm Through The Chaos by Julia**

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**Grant's Story**

**Kyle's Story**

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*Artwork by Morag*

Hi. My name is Julz. I've been an addict since I was thirteen years old. I am now forty-three. Finding stability and calm in the madness of my addiction was one the hardest things I've ever done but for sure it's one of the best. My addiction was heroin and cocaine with a handful of pills here and there. Alcohol was also a problem. So I ended up wasting thirty years chasing something that couldn't be caught, looking for something that couldn't be found, but I don't want to talk about those dark years I want to tell you how I eventually found freedom from the daily drudgery of addiction to finally walk in the light.

The first thing I had to change was my thinking. Turn the 'I can't' to 'I can'. Henry Ford once said; "Whether you believe you can or believe you can't, either way, you are correct!" I bought a whiteboard and wrote this on it, reading it every time I went into the kitchen. Self-belief is extremely important to my recovery process.

I started trying to develop good habits. I got positive quotes / life sayings sent to my phone every day. I started doing sudoku. I developed a basic routine, appearance, self-care, concentrating on the simple but necessary things in daily life; housework, meals and medication, but I knew I needed help. Going it alone had never worked before and this time I was really to accept whatever help I could. I was desperate. It was time. Time to change my life!

Through maintaining my appointments with Addiction Services, I became stable on Methadone and was referred to FIRST. Little did I know that FIRST would be an important / integral part of my recovery. I have been attending FIRST for over eighteen months. Every Monday morning, I see my worker for one to one support sessions. I developed an excellent, open and trusting relationship with my worker and our sessions have supported me through my dilemma's.

I joined groups through FIRST, a Music Group and an Art Group. Tuesday's and Thursday's. This spaced out my support and made sure I wasn't doing too much. I committed myself to these groups, missing them only when other appointments collided with them.

For the first time in thirty years I could feel myself moving forward, truly changing into a better person and focusing on my recovery.



Accepting help is not easy, but for me it was a huge step towards my recovery. I met someone who became my companion. His support and advice became paramount in my road to recovery. When we met, I was still hiding from the world and using my punk-style appearance as a defence mechanism to keep people away from me.

Through accepting the support and advice from my companion I changed my appearance and attitude towards myself and others. A decent haircut and some new clothes later I looked and felt like a different person.

I found people started to accept me but most of all, I started to accept and forgive myself. For the first time in many years I was able to start letting go of the guilt and shame that kept me down. I was becoming a new me and I needed a new life.

I started cycling every morning with my little dog and this helped me tremendously by being a positive start to my day. I joined the local gym and also exercised at home. As time passed the fractured relationship, I had with my parents began to repair. All of these positive steps would not have been possible without the support I received. Support that I am truly grateful for. Changing was not easy and didn't happen over-night. Patience and determination forced me to keep going to my appointments, and dropping my false pride was essential to accepting help and advice. One step at a time I recognised that I was moving forward.

Now, I still attend FIRST, the one to one support and the groups. I still need and accept help and advice from my companion, however now I can see that I am a better version of me. Despite living with the consequences of my addiction, HIV and other addiction related health issues, as well as being bi-polar, I am on the road to being who I want to be and for the first time in 30 years I feel content and happy. I smile and laugh. I am becoming who I was always supposed to be. I am me and I feel hope. Life without drugs is truly wonderful.

My Recovery has been a long and difficult journey. I have constantly felt that I was failing at every opportunity I had been given, to the point now where I am handing in clean samples and managing to abstain from drug use. I have been to this place before on several occasions, but I could never find something else to do with all the free time on my hands.

I have been attending FIRST for more than a year and have heard all about all the groups and activities that is on offer at FIRST but never really went to any of them as there were none that I really had an interest in.

I was then told there would be an art class starting with a professional artist and this was the first spark of excitement I had felt in a long time. I have always been interested in art and have always felt I would benefit from time with a professional to learn new skills. I was very nervous about attending the FIRST class as I do not cope well in groups but Paul (FIRST) and Kerry (artist) were very welcoming and made me feel right at home.

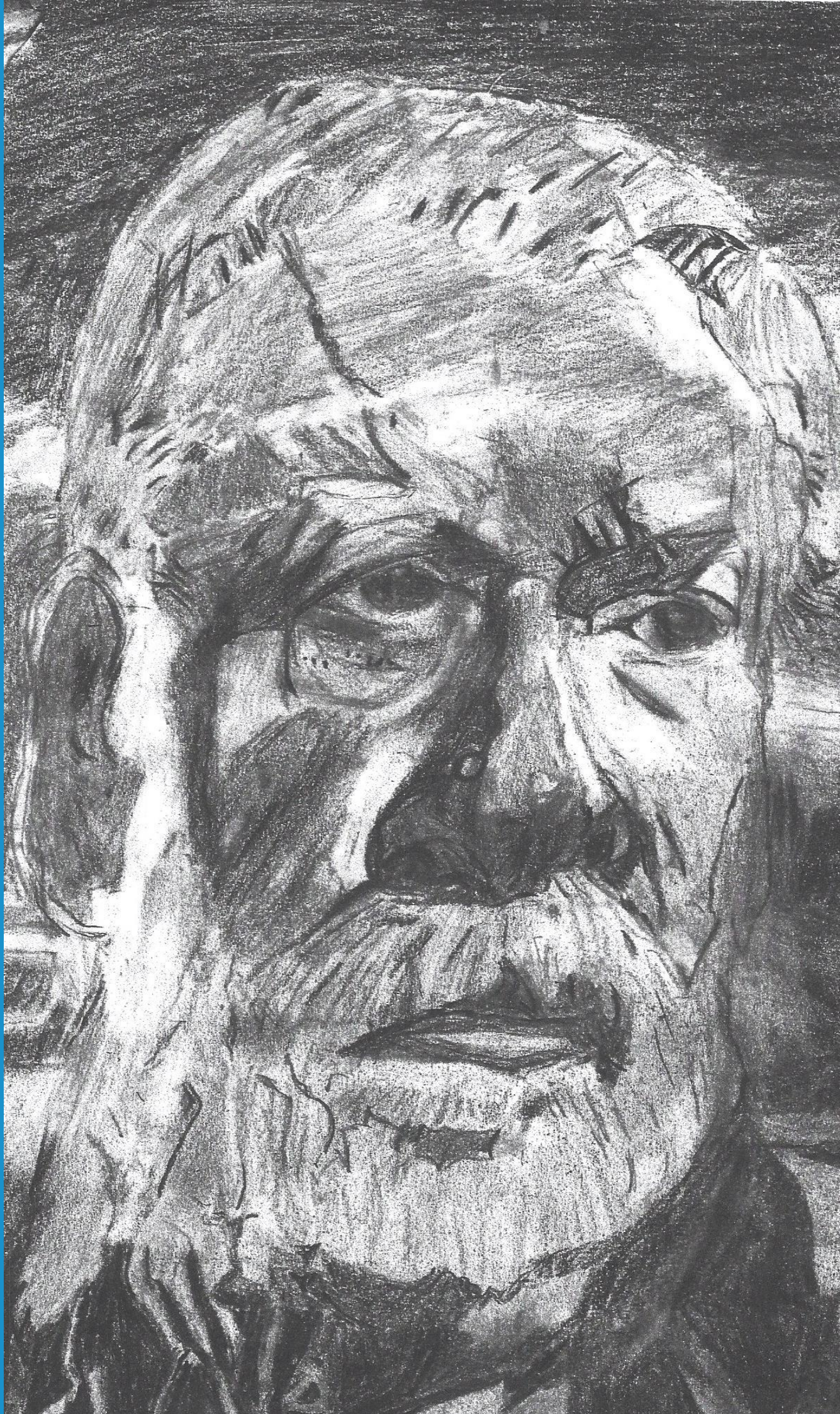
It is relaxing to sit and draw. It is extremely therapeutic, and it also helps me to relieve stress, but it has been most beneficial to my mental health. I was in a really dark place when I started attending FIRST but seeing Kenton on a regular weekly basis has helped lift my anxiety a little bit to where I could attend the art classes without “fear of the unknown” stopping me from putting myself out there.

The art class has helped me to relax and dare I say have some “fun”. It has also gave me a reason to get up and out of my house and meet some other people in the same place in their recovery and doing well.

There is something very satisfying about taking some jumbled ideas that you pluck from your imagination and create a piece of artwork that you can be proud of. I really hope that FIRST can continue with the art class as it is extremely enjoyable and is a great way to help with my recovery and anyone else who attends will enjoy the relaxed atmosphere and Kerry has a great way to explain things that is simple and easy to understand.

I will be very disappointed if I am not able to continue with the group as I feel we are just getting started with what is possible by both myself and others who have attended.





by  
*Morag*



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*by  
Julia*

Something has gone wrong.  
The birds no longer sing their sweet, sweet song.  
The sun doesn't shine,  
The rain doesn't fall.  
The sky isn't blue or sparkled with stars.  
The smirk on my face has turned upside down,  
Each muscle now making a snarl or a frown.  
Where I thought I'd seen a rainbow, only darkness.  
Will gather and grown, taking over the colours and  
Seep slowly inside my mind until it makes me  
Absorb the black.  
Every space around me here is colourless...  
Just one small, sweet song to brighten the black,  
And...  
Maybe, my lips will learn to lift into a  
Happy curve once more!  
But...  
Something has gone wrong.  
No sun or rain,  
No stars or song.  
My legs have no power to skip or run,  
I merely crawl away from the black,  
Grasping at the grey.  
Oh, how I long for a new day,  
A blue sky parted with the splendour of rainbows.  
Borne of days lost, in full colour.  
Gloriously glowing.  
One day,  
My colour will come back, but for now  
I'll fight with black.

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*by*  
*Ann*

I'm your best friend, I make you laugh  
I make you cry, I break you in half  
I pick you up when you feel down  
I make you think you are a circus clown

I'm a really good pal, you know that too  
But I twist and turn you till you feel blue  
I give you confidence, the life and soul  
But I help you dig that big black hole

I am the person that gives you life  
But I take your friends, your family, your wife  
I'm always there, 24 hours a day  
But my intent my friend is to lead you astray

Throughout the night I see you sweat  
But my dearest friend I have no regret  
I'm always there to meet your needs  
I warp your mind to do dirty deeds

When I am not there you live in fear  
So, I suggest you keep me near  
I've seen you tremble, I've seen you cry  
I whisper in your ear "don't ask why"

I don't need you, but you need me  
I'm your best friend, can't you see  
You don't need God when I am here  
I'm just capable of wiping your tears...

Don't be afraid my trusted friend  
I'll be with you until the very end  
When your head is full of persistent chatter  
I'll calm you down, I'm all that matters

Your other friends say "turn her away"  
But you know you need me, every day  
You've lost your mind, your heart and soul  
To help you through this is my only goal

When you have nothing, I'll still be there  
Unlike family and friends who don't really care  
If you've nothing left, it's not my fault  
So, don't you dare start to revolt

After all I've done, you turn me away  
You don't listen to me now, you have your say  
To be there for you, I've tried and tried  
But now you know I've always lied

You spoke with a God you didn't know  
And turned to me and said "you go!"  
I was called a liar, told I'm no friend  
God told you so and I had to end

I wanted more as I had much to take  
But you found me out, I'm such a fake  
Good luck to you my little friend  
This is not how I hoped your life would end

So, who am I, did I make you think  
It's really quite simple, I'm an alcoholic drink!!!

# STEVEN'S STORY

My name is Steven. I have been an alcoholic for thirty years and in those thirty years there has been a lot of turmoil, married twice, both wives had affairs. I think this had a lot to do with my drinking. My second wife had three kids when we met then we had a son. Now these kids saw a lot of stuff that they should have not, as they grew with the chaotic life style that I lived and drinking all the time, so after all the court rooms and fines I left my wife and met someone else who was on drugs. This just made the drinking worse. More court rooms.

Then one morning I woke up in a hotel room and it was time to sort this drinking out. That's when I went back to FIRST as I'd worked with FIRST for a few months before because of my drinking and stress with work and how I handled it.

So, I went I back to FIRST with my boss from work, and my FIRST worker got some numbers for Residential Rehab. I went for two weeks. When I came out of Rehab I had to start fresh with nothing so I got a caravan.

I worked with my FIRST worker every week and then every two weeks. I worked with my worker one to one. This was a new start, so I was determined to make it work. I changed to make it work. I changed the way I handled things.

I went on a Walk & Talk Group which was very good for me as I could talk to other people that had some sort of problem too. I cannot thank FIRST enough for what they have done for me as when FIRST met me I was a broken man. Now I have got my own house, my kids back in my life and I have met a wonderful woman and I hope one day we can be man and wife.

I know that all of this would not have been possible if it was not for FIRST. Yes, I worked hard but so did they.

Thank you.



In May 2017 I was in a desperate state. I had been solidly drinking for a two-month period and things were getting worse and worse, with my health, relationships and work suffering. Life with alcohol has been a battle which I've lost and I'm glad to admit that now. I have been in and out of AA for ten years and have had long periods of sobriety in that time only to go and throw it away numerous times by stopping going to meetings thinking I can do things my way. Just when life was looking good and things starting to fall into place another drink would come into my life again and things would quickly spiral out of control until I was back lying, hiding, frightened again and couldn't get out of the cycle of being dominated by alcohol.

On May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017 I had my last drink, I had to fight desperately not to have that first drink that next day. I can vividly remember the sweats, the panic attacks, no sleep, the mess. It is something I don't ever want to go through again.

I was put in contact with FIRST through Lynebank Hospital and ADAPT. I had one to one meeting's every week for three months with a Support Worker who was in recovery. It's hard to put into words but that person helped me so much. He told me his story, where alcohol dependency had taken him and his recovery. I needed the one to one contact at that point. It was something I'd never had or felt comfortable with. Though I'd been to AA, I'd never been very good at opening up. I was honest with him and talked about things I'd never talked about with anybody else, I trusted him, and that trust grew each week. He listened to my story, offering advice and telling me how he had dealt with situations. I looked forward to those meetings and was sorry when they stopped.

I regularly attend AA and do talk more now and that is thanks to the people at FIRST. I am eighteen months sober and life is good just now but I know that to keep it that way I have to keep going to meetings and talk. I also still have contact from FIRST which I am grateful for.

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Hi, it's me, an alcoholic drink - your "pick you up"  
when you feel your heart sink.

In happy times, and times of trouble,  
I'm the only one to shield you in a bubble.

The first time you turned to me for help,  
you hid from your mum 'cos you'd get a skelp.

But it was worth you taking the chance and you drank  
yourself silly into a happy trance.

You loved my soul and called me your friend,  
Pals appeared from afar, you were the latest trend.

The invisible child existed no more because life without  
drink became unbearably sore.

Now this was my chance for unrelenting hold and  
to give you much horror when you felt so bold.

Your charm and happiness now belonged to me,  
I was killing you within and no-one could see.

I thrive on control and warp your mind,  
Resentments eat away - you can never be kind.

You fight, you kill and break many a heart, but you couldn't  
care less, you think you are smart.

I laugh in your face and rip at your soul,  
I love when you vomit with your head in a bowl.

Now you are mine, you belong only to me,  
You beg me to go but that couldn't be.

I now have you all to myself,  
Family and friends see someone else.

*by*  
*Ann*

I've only just started, there's much more to come,  
To think you can dump me is really dumb.

Now it is time to go for your mind,  
I'm glad I chose you, you are just my kind.

To tear you apart and rip at your soul, gives me such pleasure,  
I'm reaching my goal.

Your pleasure has gone, you're drinking alone,  
crying and shouting just fades to a groan.

No-one cares if you're alive or dead. You've f\*\*\*\*d off everyone,  
There's no more to be said.

I've got your mind, your soul your health, your family your house  
and all your wealth.

But all is not lost, you don't have to sink. You've still got me,  
"your faithful drink".

You awake with such fear, you tremble and shake,  
It's not over yet, there's much more to take.

You sleep in the street, mind and body both sick,  
Passers by don't care and give you a kick.

Children just stare; pulled away by their mum,  
You are begging to God that the end will come.

But "no my friend", you've not had enough,  
You've got another ten years of sleeping rough.

You beg, you steal; not for food but for wine,  
It knocks you right out in the shortest of time.

You don't give a f\*\*k, there's no way out,  
The world has gone deaf when you scream and shout.

Your hair has gone thin, some teeth are now missing,  
You stink like a pig; no love and no kissing.

Family pretend not to know who you are,  
F\*\*k you, f\*\*k you, you've now gone too far ".

You wake up and look but don't know where you are,  
You think you have travelled so far, so far.

What is your name? Why does nothing seem real?  
You cry out to God as you humbly kneel.

Too late, too late, you've been locked up,  
You'll never get out, "oh what the f\*\*k".

What happened that night you cannot recall,  
You don't know your name, nothing at all

You tried to beat me, but you have lost,  
You'll never recover at any cost.

The doors are locked so you can't take off,  
My reward to you is of course Korsakoff.

Goodbye my friend; you stupid fool,  
Remember you thought your first drink was cool.

You're sick, you're ill. Your body is dead. You played with fire.  
There's no more to be said - God Bless.

Born into a chaotic lifestyle with not a lot of hope of a bright future, some would say I was destined for failure. To an extent this was true. But not completely. My mother was solely looking after my three brothers and I and my father, who to this day I still don't know was never around. From what I can remember my earliest years were pretty rubbish to say the least. We would frequently be left alone at home while mum was out doing whatever she needed to do, and the cupboards were usually bare. Our flat was in a block of four in what was the most deprived area of the town at the time, with no carpets and mattresses slumped on the damp floor and nails sticking out of the beading running along the hallway, it wasn't the most suitable environment for young kids to be growing up in. I remember one time a guy climbing up the drainpipe for whatever reason and my mum shouting and bawling. I didn't have a clue what was going on but I can only imagine mum was due money or something.

Another time I found my stepdad lying in the close as I was going outside to play with my friends, and he was completely unconscious with a needle sticking out of his arm. I was so scared and again I had no idea what was going on, but it later came out that he had overdosed. He somehow made a full recovery, but it didn't stop him from carrying on with his habits. So, as you can imagine life wasn't exactly good at this point for my brothers and I or my mother.

I was quite naive at such a young age and I don't think I was fully aware of what was going on around me. I just knew it wasn't normal. Eventually, my mum must have had enough, and she decided to make the difficult decision to put my brothers and I up for adoption. Things must have been so tough for her and she only wanted us to have a good upbringing away from all the chaos. Today, I completely respect and love my mum for doing this for us. So, we went to stay with our gran and grandad in Perthshire while my mum got herself the right help and while the Social Work department found us a suitable family. After about six months or so we were starting to visit a couple who were eager to adopt us, we all got on so well. We would go to soft plays and cafes and simply spend time together as we all got to know one another and before we knew it, we were ready to move into our new home. I can remember how strange it was coming from such a chaotic life on the estate to this new quiet cul-de-sac with hard working families around us. I liked it.

My older brother had severe learning difficulties and he went to live with foster parents elsewhere, but we regularly met up with him for days out. Our first Christmas with our new family was amazing, we were all well and truly spoilt to say the least.



We emptied all our selection boxes into a box and the amount of chocolate was absolutely unreal! The rest of the family came around to visit and again we were well looked after with more presents and vouchers and more lynx gift sets than we knew what to do with. Life was going pretty well. The three of us started new schools and nurseries and made loads of new friends. We started joining clubs and going to football training and doing all the things we were once not able to do. It wasn't until a few years after I started acting up and my behaviour changed.

I would come home from school most days and almost immediately I'd find a reason to start an argument with my mum. It was never a valid argument, but I seemed to thrive off the attention and a lot of the time it would end with me being grounded for a few days or told I couldn't go to my friends that evening. It never did me any favours, but I still did it, almost every day. As I got older my temper and attitude went downhill rapidly. My mum and dad eventually had me going to anger management classes once a week. The classes never really helped me, but it was the only thing my parents could think of trying. As I progressed into high school I knuckled down and got on with it. I done really well in my fourth-year exams and always did my best. Regardless, I still took my temper out on my family at home and at one point I ran away. It was only for a night, but I wanted to make a point. I felt like my relationship with my parents was different from my brothers and I think it subconsciously affected me.

It got to the point where I wasn't listening to anyone and started doing my own thing, drinking on weekdays after school and smoking and staying out later than I should have. I even started stealing from people, at first a couple of quid then one time I got myself into a lot of bother after stealing thousands of pounds from a neighbour. I think that was the first time I was ever involved with the police and I was lucky my parents were looking out for me and they paid the person back, otherwise I would have been charged with the offence.

Eventually my mum and dad had enough. My younger brothers were starting to get frightened of my behaviours and it was impacting on the whole family, so they decided it was best I moved back in with my grandparents in Perth. I still had regular contact with them when I moved in with gran and grandad but after six months or so that declined. I had made new friends at my new school and I started smoking cannabis and drinking heavily at the weekends. I very quickly began trying new drugs like cocaine and acid and I started selling them to pay for my own.

I still done well at my new high school and passed my final exams and my anger had somehow disappeared for the time being. I was enjoying my new lifestyle. I got myself a couple of part time jobs and started going to college doing music production, but my drug and alcohol habits worsened. I was staying out all weekend and getting myself into horrible states, somehow maintaining my work life at the same time.

My life must have looked pretty good from the outside, but little did I know it was only the beginning of a long, dangerous path I had taken. I eventually got thrown out from grans house after wrecking the place whilst they were on holiday. I got myself into a hostel in the city centre and stayed there for about six months where I started hanging about with new people yet again. My old friends had obviously had enough of my chaotic unpredictable behaviour and left me alone. I befriended a guy who lived just around the corner and began partying with him and a few of his mates and somehow ended up taking legal highs, as they were known at the time.

It quickly became a regular thing, to the point it was the first thing I did when I woke up every morning and the last thing I did at night. I began stealing to fund my habit for Spice and soon started taking other highs as well. I began getting involved with the police and getting myself into all sorts of bother. I'd wake up most days wondering what had happened the night before, usually with some kind of powder lying next to me still. That would set me up for the day and I'd soon be off looking for my next gram. It got beyond the point where I could still hold down my job and ended up with nothing left. I had sold everything I owned. All my friends wanted nothing to do with me and I was lost. I had been at a loose ended one day and found myself in a public library looking for my birth mother on Facebook. I found her quite quickly and was talking to her for a while. It was good to hear from her after all those years and I found out I had three younger sisters who were eager to meet their big brother.

I explained to my mum what my situation was, and she offered for me to come stay with them for a while, so I jumped at the chance. I immediately packed what little belongings I had and managed to get a lift through on Christmas day of all days. I got there in the morning and it felt like I had known them all my whole life. My sisters were so excited to see me and my mum and stepdad took me in with open arms, I felt like I belonged there. So, I stayed there for a few months and got myself a job as a kitchen fitter and started getting myself into a little routine again. I was still smoking weed and drinking but I somehow made it work, for a little while anyway.



I soon started skipping shifts and got to the point where I didn't want to keep it up and never went back. I soon got myself a flat two minutes away from my mum's and got myself settled in. After only about two weeks I was woken up one morning to someone banging on my front door. I had managed to fall asleep the night before and left candles lit which ended up with me being left homeless for the time being. As a result of my carelessness I ended up getting myself a room at a local hostel in the centre of town and for whatever reason, I started to drift away from my whole family. I started hanging around with other people from the hostel and I was regularly travelling back through to Perth to buy my legal highs, as they were known at the time, and spent most of my days lazing around the building.

It wasn't long before I clicked on to what everyone else around me were getting up to, I would see the guys I shared the flat with smoking something from a piece of tin foil and curiosity got the better of me one day. I think my head was in a bad place at this time with regards to my relationship with family deteriorating and my mental health unpredictable from abusing psychoactive substances and I asked to try it. I instantly loved the buzz I got - I felt a huge release from all of the burdens of life. I could escape from reality and completely avoid feeling all those negative emotions I was usually consumed by. Within a couple of weeks of smoking heroin, I made the stupid decision to inject instead. I saw myself looking for any way at all to make a little cash for my next little hit.

I started shoplifting and getting myself arrested almost every other day. My life was in complete turmoil. I began begging on the high street as a desperate attempt to make money without getting arrested again and it soon become a routine. Up first thing in the morning, no shower, no shave, straight to my pitch.

I'd sit and make my first tenner and run up to score my morning bag then straight back to my pitch feeling 'normal' for the time being. After that I'd sit for the rest of the day until it got dark and I'd return to the hostel with whatever cash I had kindly been given by people. Normally a bag of food as well.

After about a year of taking heroin I was in and out of prison, very rarely in touch with my family and my health was completely strained. In one year, I had almost ten different addresses from either being evicted by the council or getting myself into too much bother in that area. I thought that was it, how my life was going to be forever. No way out.

The person I never thought I'd be, I had become. I was a sheer existence and nothing more. Something for people to gossip about. I saw friends pass away, people being hurt for personal gain and lose everything they had, and it never stopped me.

I overdosed twice in the space of twenty-four hours from taking a cocktail of drugs and drink and even this become a usual thing. I ended up on a drug treatment and testing order (DTTO) from the court. I'd have to attend three appointments a week with a social worker and present at court once a month for a review. I still carried on the way I was despite having all the help around me. I eventually got in contact with FIRST, an addiction service in my area who offered me the chance to change my life. To get out of the rut I had got myself into. They offered me the chance of going to residential rehab, which was originally for six weeks until they seen my progress which then turned into six months. I took it without even questioning it.

I was soon on my way to rehab. It seemed too good to be true. I got settled in and started reducing on my methadone prescription and soon broke free from its grasp. I was clean. For the first time in goodness knows how long and it was surreal. I could taste food. I could see things clearer and I could feel emotions I couldn't before. This was it for me, this was the beginning of my new life. Phoenix Futures provided me with a safe surrounding where I could learn tools and coping strategies to help change my thinking towards negative influences. I worked on behaviours which were once to my detriment and grew in confidence and built self-esteem.

I had been taken apart carefully and built back up into a strong willed, determined and positive person. I spoke openly and honestly about my past to my peers who gave me nothing but attention and positive encouragement. Today I am currently in the re-entry phase of the programme. I have the drive to succeed with all the help around me I will ever need. I have my family back in my life.

My brothers who had been my driving force right from the beginning and I hadn't been in touch with for several years now talk to me every day asking how I am, and they are overjoyed to have their big brother back. I can now be there for them and my younger sisters who once didn't know the real me. I really have been reinvented. And that's completely down to the amazing opportunity Phoenix Futures and Liz Nardone of FIRST gave me. Thank you, Phoenix and Liz and thanks for reading my experience.

My early childhood was not great.

My father and mother split up not long after my birth and my father subsequently passed away from pneumonia and alcohol related issues when I was two years old. I saw a photo of him only once in my life.

My mother, throughout my childhood was a very heavy drinker, an alcoholic by anyone's definition, just not my mother's. I was taken into the care system at the age of seven where I was to begin a journey that would hang with me to this day.

After roughly one year in a state-run children's home I was placed in the care of foster parents. The father being a prison officer and the mother a stay at home mum as was typical of the time. Not long after arrival with this family and being happily integrated within the family setting along with their son and daughter things would take a dramatic and painful turn for the worse for me. During a telling off at the age of eight I was subsequently punished by being beaten with the family dog's choke chain.

The daily challenge for me for the next four years would be to avoid receiving such actions, however more often than not it would be a failed endeavour. Beatings given ranged from being two minutes late home from school to "someone" stole the biscuit...never any real reason. These beatings were also accompanied by more subtle punishments such as being put outside in the snow with only shorts on, being permanently grounded, not allowed a bath for which I was then informed "I smell". Mix in with that the four years of sexual abuse, I can say that my time with foster parents was an absolute joy whereby I was encouraged in my growth to be the absolute best person I could be....

Upon leaving the delight of foster care I was placed back into a state-run children's home. At first, things here seemed ok for myself as there were no apparent senseless beatings or other abuses to hide from. However, while settling in at the new secondary school I managed to get myself in a spot of bother that had me removed from the school for three days.

This had me terrified beyond belief due the mother of all beatings this was going to bring on me. To my confusion all I received was a nuclear explosion of noise in my ear by way of a member of staff shouting at me!! **NO BEATINGS!!!**



However, I'm also a bit of a devious s\*\*t and was quick to catch on. So, I'm now roughly twelve years old and have a chip on my shoulder the size of the planet, and no punishment beatings. I quickly realise that now I will not be beaten so severely that I can't leave the house or that I will be banned from taking PE at school in case any bruising is seen.

This was a license for me to do whatever I wanted, and I did just that. I got kicked out of school between the second and third year a total of fifteen times, (to the detriment of my education). I constantly played truant from school, would take to shoplifting for a laugh. I smashed the windows of the local schools and more horrifically to local houses, this for the purpose of being chased by the homeowner, which at the time was viewed as just good fun. I took up smoking purely because I was told not to.

There was a consequence for these actions which was normally just a grounding, pffft...that worked.....NOT ONE F\*\*\*\*\*G BIT. The ethos within the children's home was basically don't cause bother and stay off the radar, which to be fair is a good skill to learn. "The Grey Man" as the Army terms it, still serves me well today.

Another reason to learn to be unseen was to not get any special treatment which varied depending on the member of staff. For me this resulted in nothing more than physical fights involving both male and female staff members on occasion. For others, I believe things to have been more sinister (at the time of writing this, the particular children's home that I was residing in is currently under investigation for historical child sex abuse and as I am not waiving my right to anonymity I will say no more of this). After roughly three to four years I returned to my mothers, having settled slightly and definitely not getting into any trouble at school.

Due to the upbringing I had, education was of no priority to me at all. Although given time it did settle on me to the point that I then regretted my actions at school and what those actions cost me in terms of my possible education lost. (I did go back to my old High School to publicly apologise to specific teachers and more importantly to thank others for their understanding and possible faith in me). In terms of education I had to go to college and grab bits of what could be called a proper education.

Not until my now ex-partner got pregnant with my daughter, did I go back to college to study in construction to eventually go on and gain my HND Architectural Technology and HND Construction Management. This was the first time in my life that I had started something and saw it to completion.

I don't know if it was a result of my childhood, being constantly told that I was thick and useless and would amount to nothing and would end up in jail where my foster father would be waiting for me (even today this thought still terrifies me, even though he'll be in his seventies) or just my wasted education but now I have within me the desire to constantly learn, all the time. If not recognised courses just my own research – a light bulb, modern methods of execution, mental health.... ANYTHING, in part to prove I'm not academically thick.

My employment history is not great and not bad, just ordinary. I've worked mostly in construction from labouring up to the drawing office into site engineering and building surveying to site management. Also, from 1997 until May 2016 I was in the Territorial Army (T.A), providing me with many fond memories and characters met over the years and the odd bad events, nothing to shout about here. The only downfall here was my first foray into the forces in 1991 for a period with the TA where I was introduced to a major love of my life, the good old pint of lager.

From the early 90's when I first started to drink, I was only a social drinker only over time from the mid 90's would it develop. I'll come to that!! Probably because of the way I had been brought up.

I have a very deep and intrinsic mistrust of all people. Never being shown how to treat people correctly it's fair to say that my relations with the fairer sex have not been good.

A few young conquests as is done at that age, then at some point in 1996 I met my ex-partner. We did not really gel at first. Most people didn't with me and that was fine. Over time however we did start to get along and in time my partner became pregnant with my daughter. I'll state that at that time as I was drinking on a nearly daily basis. Determined that my daughter would not be subjected to the upbringing I had, I decided to go to college and get a proper qualification and a job.

Best laid plans an all....

I say I stuck college out, and I did, but there was a lot of non-committal on my part, so it took longer than average to get the qualifications.

Add to that two more sons and my ever-increasing drinking, so far I'm doing well in making sure my children wouldn't suffer my fate.

By this time, I'd left college, my mother has recently passed away which involved me being permanently p\*\*\*\*d for six months in grief!!!

Mix in that I'm working all the time, so as a way to relax I'd like to spend time with my partner and our children, because that's how any "normal" dad would do it, except nope not me, down time means drinking time. No drink, well now comes the temper tantrums, police calls, being removed from the family home.

So, after eight years of my drink laden abuse my partner finally says enough is enough and we split. Her one rule for me getting access to my children - not getting extremely drunk. Fair one in my opinion, so for the most part I stick to this.

No real relationships for the next few years until 2010 when I meet a lass through a then friend, through time we get engaged. Then being in the now Army Reserves I decide that I need to do my bit and volunteer for an Operational Tour of Afghanistan.

In 2010 at the age of thirty-seven / thirty-eight I am fitter than most young men in their twenties due to the level of fitness training imposed on me by the armed forces and the targets I had set myself. Even my daily drinking levels were reducing.

For the first time in a long time I felt physically and emotionally good. Then it happened...

*(Gets a bit pink and fluffy here, sorry)*

*(Not this bit)*

First, I get so hooked on drink that when I'm sent to Germany and eventually can't drink, I have a mental flip flop (I now know this was withdrawals and mild hallucinations), so I get sent home, so no Afghanistan. My shame to bear. (Another issue)

*(This bit)*

Through my fiancé I met what I thought was the love of my life. I mean this was my soul mate. It felt like it physically hurt to be away from her. I just couldn't stand being at home on my own, she pretty much felt the same way. So, I've left my then fiancé to be with this woman, all is sweet and fluffy, nothing can hurt us.

*(not so fluffy now)*

Well her drinking levels and my drinking capacity were not a great mix and after roughly a year, things were getting a bit volatile. So, I'd found a new way to screw things up for me!!!

However due to my new partners own drinking or issues or whatever planet she was from she would take a delight in pushing my temper as she put it "to see how far she could push me" (*Definitely not fluffy now*).

It's fair to say she did push me beyond my limits, but to her credit the way that she decided to push me and shatter what little faith I had in humanity was I believe, inspired evilness which until the day I die I will never forgive.

During a long and heartfelt talk, we decided that we would try for a baby of our own. In my mind I was f\*\*\*\*\*g ecstatic, not only a chance to have a child with a woman I was so hopelessly gone on, but the chance to have a child and show her or him a life of love that I had been denied and that I had failed to show properly to my current children due to my now full on alcoholism...

Drinking was reduced with alcohol free nights introduced, a healthy diet implemented and RESULT...the wee swimmers do their job and we are over the moon. SHE'S PREGNANT.

I couldn't believe it, finally a chance to do things right and provide for a little bundle of love in roughly nine months.

Cutting a long story short, I got a text message to say that my then partner was ill and needed me, so I left my work at the TA and then rushed to her side. I was told she's losing the child. She had an appointment to go back in a week!!! (*yes I bought this!!!*).



A week later, we were not talking, she went to hospital and there was no child anymore. That was it. Gone. Deal with it – get drunk beyond belief. A week later I got a text from her as she couldn't deal with the guilt anymore...The text – I terminated the baby, so I won't need to see you!!! Got to love that earth-shattering text, it changed my life forever.

So, having learned to use the alcohol to cover my memories and block my dreams I went into overdrive on the drink. It was great for dulling the pain, really is.... daily consumption was a minimum of 3 litres of Frosty Jack.

This was now increasing and by 2014/15 I was getting to two bottles a day. Further in to 2015 I was drinking a bottle of port, wine and cider almost daily. Occasionally a bottle of whisky, usually Grouse or Asda cheapest vodka.

I went to my doctor, still don't know why to this day but I did. Told him about the drinking and referrals start flying and I'm at NHS Addiction Services in November 2015. I started to follow their plan to reduce my alcohol levels and on 19 April 2016, I had my first sober night.

I was so chuffed and excited and hyped up at being sober. My quality of life sucked, but it was mine and I got to remember it. I didn't have to check Facebook or my phone texts to see who I'd upset last night. THIS WAS FANTASTIC...

I will spare you the details but at the same time I was also involved in a very serious court case. I got sober through this and remained sober through all this. During this time, I had also engaged the services of a counselling service. After one bad experience I decided not to give up but to try again. Unknown to me their system had changed in that now all work was done in a six-week block.

My new counsellor was this remarkable little woman called Mary (not her real name). I sat in front of her on the first session and it felt like my mouth was speaking and my head was shouting "SHUT THE F\*\*K UP, WHAT ARE YOU DOING", literally all my life spilled out and I couldn't stop it. However, this is where it went wrong as six weeks in, I had to leave their services. I would state that this is no reflection on Mary as her hands were tied by a clearly broken system.

During the fifteen months or so of the court case, I hadn't dealt with being sober just went on autopilot, afterwards at counselling when everything came out, I wasn't prepared for the onslaught of feelings I was about to receive.

So, like a mobile phone reset to factory default, I defaulted back to what I knew and relapsed days short of the one year sober. I also made the mistake of mis-calculating the fifteen days to be clear of Antabuse and drank early, not a mistake I care to repeat EVER.

I was devastated and disappointed in myself and for all the people I had let down. So I drank some more, and more and more.....

By then I was receiving a better than healthy money income so now I'm drinking whisky almost daily with cider and port and wine and lager..... everyday. Drink, pass out, wake up drink... fortunately, I had the sense to ask for some referrals, one to Restoration Fife and one to FIRST. To date that has to be one of the best decisions I have ever f\*\*\*\*\*g made without a doubt.

Due to the help of some very dedicated individuals on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2017 I got sober again.

When I was about six years old I remember being in a pub with my dad and he gave me fifty pence to put in the fruit machine. I won a few pound back and handed him a couple of pound and said "The next rounds on me". Everybody laughed and I went to the shop next door to buy myself some sweets, feeling proud of myself. I thought about how great it would be when that happens to me. Eight years later I started drinking myself, an alcopop here and there, whatever I could get out of the fridge without anybody noticing. I began to talk my friends into putting our pocket money together to buy alcohol from the shop, three litres of cider here, three litres there as often as possible. When I was old enough to claim Jobseekers Allowance, I began to buy bottles of wine as it made me feel posh compared to my cider drinking friends.

When I realised that the money wasn't enough to keep me drinking, I started working, but with working came more money, and with more money came more drink. It wasn't long until I was drinking a litre of vodka a night. Not long after this, my partner at the time gave birth to my first son. It was great but I continued to drink and things didn't work out between us, so I left because I'd rather drink than be nagged about looking after my child.

I met another girl shortly after whom I loved very much and for a time I severely cut down on my drinking. However, since I never actually stopped, we began to have arguments and that led straight back to a litre of vodka a night. She left and I spent all my rent money on cigarettes and alcohol, then abandoned my flat to go live with my family in England. This didn't last long as by this point, I was a wreck and couldn't socialise. At times I could barely even form sentences, I was so drunk. I quickly found myself living on the street. Even though I was working I was spending my money on drink rather than my own place. My friend let me sleep in his old caravan and eventually I managed to find the money to get a bus back to Scotland.

I moved into my Mum's spare room and continued to work to drink until I found my love. Everything was great, then she became pregnant and stopped drinking - I on the other hand did not. I promised I'd stop drinking as soon as the baby was born, but I immediately got tooth ache and spent the first 2 weeks of his life in a brandy induced state. This turned into continued drinking which lasted right up until she became pregnant again. I stopped drinking in front of my children, and I never drank at work, but I was drunk every other second of every day.

I stopped going to bed, preferring to listen to music by myself. I would sit up all night and survive on ten hours of sleep a week if I was lucky. It wasn't long after my youngest son was born that I was told to leave my home. I moved back in with my mum again. Only this time I felt I had lost everything.

My home, my partner and my children. I began drinking so much I could barely work properly. I was drinking nine or ten litres of vodka a week and missing days at work, my depression was spiralling out of control and I could barely function around other people. I fell out with everybody at home and at work and I had no time for my friends. I had become incredibly ill. My body was numb most of the time and I was bringing up acid on a regular basis. I could barely remember who I was - a drunken shadow of a man I could have been.

In a very deep drunken depression, I knew that I needed to make a change, so I phoned the doctors in the morning and explained how much I had been drinking - he then put me in touch with Addiction Services. I had a home detox to begin with. I spent the first few days lying around watching Netflix and having more sleep than I've ever had since I was a teenager but then I decided I needed to get out, just going for a walk here and there.

I have an appointment with FIRST once a week which has helped a lot, a coffee and a chat while we work through paperwork, I have started going on groups with them, the Walking Group is fun. I spent last week collecting brambles which I used to make some jam, the first time I've done this since I was a small child, and every two weeks or so I have been treating myself to a tattoo as a reward for not drinking, which has helped me feel better about myself.

I am now almost six months sober and starting to live my life instead of throwing it away into a bottle. Work is going well, and I am getting along better with my friends, family, co-workers and most importantly my children. Sometimes I still have an off day, but with my bus pass I can just jump on a bus and go sit somewhere nice and get a breath of fresh air, or pop into a cafe out of town and sit by myself having a coffee and reading a chapter or two of my book. I am looking forward to taking part in the Recovery March in Glasgow and taking part in other cool activities. All in all, I have made the right decision and I look forward to having all sorts of adventures as I continue down my path of recovery.



Yes, it's been just over five years since I was discharged from FIRST and these have been the best five years of my life. That's saying something because I'm in my mid-seventies!

The important story to tell is the road to recovery and FIRST, along with my religious beliefs and determination to make it happen, but it was nothing short of a miracle. I had prayed for an end to the nightmare of alcohol addiction for years and had given up hope. A failed attempt at ending my life was the catalyst that put a glimmer of light at the end of a very long, dark tunnel.

Everything I thought was negative – I was worth nothing. That had been a recurring theme for many years, and I didn't know how to challenge that negativity. At FIRST, I was listened to with patience and understanding and realism. There would be no magic fix, and nothing was demanded of me but if I had the motivation and co-operated, the fix would happen in time.

It was a gradual process and I was asked challenging questions about my outlook on life, my background, relationships etc and given questionnaires to complete. The latter were kept for reference purposes so that, further down the line, responses would be compared. Slowly I learned to challenge the deeply entrenched thought processes that had destroyed any positive aspects of life and saw my questionnaire responses creep up to the positive goal.

After five years, I'm still amazed at how skilfully my mental attitudes were laid bare and turned completely around. Because I made every effort to be open-minded about what was asked of me, my motivation to succeed in recovery increased dramatically at the first signs of progress. And any progress was constantly highlighted – very important in the search for positivity. Just as the slide into addiction has a domino effect so the same applies to recovery. One thing leads to another.

I developed strategies to keep myself 'safe'. Staying away from the off-licence was an obvious one and, if I had to go to the shops, a written list of items was strictly adhered to.

I brainwashed myself into believing that any form of alcohol was poison to me (that had the basis of truth) and I kept very fresh in my mind how terribly physically sick it had made me. To this day, I can feel that awful sickness when I think about alcohol.

Early on, as the sickness wore off and withdrawal diminished, my appetite improved, and sleepless nights became less frequent. Outdoors, I walked a little taller and stopped avoiding people I knew. Little rewards for myself were an instant gratification – a bunch of flowers or a visit to the cinema (there was more money in my pocket). Best of all was beginning to build bridges with my family.

Access to my grandchildren had been denied for obvious reasons, so ever so slowly, as their parents saw sobriety in me, my grandchildren became part of my life again.

Any addiction affects every aspect of a person's life and even turns them into potential criminals. I became a liar and a thief in my efforts to disguise and continue drinking. I'm very ashamed of that behaviour but I don't dwell on regret – that's a waste of time and effort. Concentration is now centred on staying healthy and, in that way, thank the people who invested their time and effort in helping me along the recovery road.

Further down the line, knowing that I needed more activity, I signed up for voluntary work and I would sincerely recommend that to anyone. It was the biggest step to rebuilding my life and has proved to be a very wise move in many ways. I've met new people (many of them less fortunate than myself), have a positive outlet for my abilities, have learned new skills and have something to occupy my mind. I'm being useful and don't question that.

To cap it all, with the money that would otherwise have been spent on drink, I ticked something on my bucket list – a month long trip to Africa – all by myself. That was something I would never have considered before and is a measure of the radical change in me that sobriety and FIRST have brought about.

In some ways, I think I needed to be in that hellish black hole of addiction and to be in the depths of despair in order to be a whole person. It's because of that awful time that I appreciate so much all the good things I have in my life right now. I firmly believe that something good can always be found from something bad. Lately, my physical health has not been so good but as a result of being mentally well, I am able to cope with frailties that would otherwise have been depressing.

It's wonderful to be able to say, "life is good" and "I am in control" and really, really mean it.

# SIX MONTHS

I got in to FIRST (Fife's Community Rehabilitation Service) after going to the doctor to ask for tablets to stop my cravings for alcohol which had become unmanageable. He told me I had to go through the ADAPT service, so I phoned them and after convincing them I had a problem I was referred to FIRST.

I was sceptical at the beginning but agreed to meet with Bill the Support Worker as I thought I would have to go through the process to obtain the medicine to stop my craving.

I had reached rock bottom after more than 30 years of hard drinking and knew I needed help.

However, I did not think that counselling would really help me given previous experiences where I had been told to keep a 'drinking diary' which I knew would never work as I have only ever known how to drink one way – to get drunk.

Thankfully, I hit it off with Bill from the start. I realised he had been through a lot in terms of his own drinking and I knew this was going to be a bit different from previous counselling, not only was Bill different – he wasn't a Counsellor. My preconceived idea of just getting through a session with someone I couldn't relate to, who I imagined may even tell me to cut down my alcohol intake - an unworkable possibility, were quickly put to bed.

Bill explained to me the concept of mental psychological obsession which I quickly recognised was what I was suffering from. I knew I was a binge alcoholic or someone with alcohol use disorder if you prefer, but I wasn't suffering any form of physical withdrawal symptoms and the root of my problem was cravings for alcohol which were brought on by the mental psychological obsession.

This was something I hadn't heard before and I left the first session full of hope in my goal of finally quitting drinking altogether – for I realised total abstinence was the only way I could achieve any kind of peace.

by  
Kevan



I consider myself to have been (touch wood) a functioning alcoholic. I have a decent career and family life, but I was obsessed with alcohol.

I would find I used any excuse to feed my desire to binge drink. Being stuck in traffic on the way home would see me divert to the pub for a session. A quick lie to the wife about where I was staying, and I was on my way.

I had panic attacks and suffered dreadful anxiety after a binge. My blood pressure rocketed and on a couple of occasions I called an ambulance because I thought I was having a heart attack which was an alcohol-induced panic attack – basically a bad hangover.

I approached a landmark birthday and realised that this behaviour had to stop. I had seen others take the approach that it wasn't happening to them as they ploughed headlong into major health events – even death. In truth I'm a bit of a coward and don't fancy checking out too soon.

The session with Bill improved my mental health, helped me quit drinking and gave me a new outlook on life but you have to want to change.

I have been sober for more than six months now and on a number of occasions I've let my mind wander and thought about a binge. I haven't gone there, and I put that down to FIRST. Bill has taught me to stand back and think it through – what starts out as a romantic comedy turns into a horror film at the end of the night, something he said in the early days that resonates with me.

I don't want to let myself and everyone around me down. I don't feel pressure as I know this is the right path for me. Having Bill and FIRST in my corner has given me the confidence to approach the future full of hope and optimism. I would thoroughly recommend anyone who identifies with any of the above to contact FIRST for support.

*A huge 'Thank You' to everyone for sharing  
their own personal experiences and enabling  
the production of this Book.*

*I have no doubt that the Stories and Poems contained in it  
will be an inspiration to everyone who reads them.*

*Recovery can and does happen.*

*This production proves just that.*

*With grateful thanks from everyone at FIRST.*

*April Adam  
Service Manager  
June 2019*





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