

Conquering cocaine...

through the eyes of a counsellor

Brian had taken cocaine for 12 years when he first came to Drugline. At first I thought he was just looking for ways to alleviate the suffering it caused. I told him that his only way out was to conquer his addiction.

Deep down, Brian was desperate to get off cocaine. Hooked at just 20 and now aged 32, he was at the point of no return, only just hanging on to his job and about to be disowned by his despairing parents. But he had to take that first step for himself.

I wondered whether I would see Brian again. It isn't unusual for dependents to make only one visit to Drugline. But he kept his next appointment having somehow found the strength to stay off cocaine for a full week.

This time he found it easier to talk to me. He spoke honestly about his obsession with cocaine and how it had totally taken over his life. He shared with me the depths to which he had sunk to get money to feed his habit. He talked about his sleepless nights due to the 'buzz' caused by cocaine and the hideousness of each fix, temporarily relieved only by the next fix as the merry-go-round sped on and on, too fast for him to jump off.

He had reached a crossroads in his life.

Regaining self-esteem

The following weeks were far from easy for Brian as he continued to battle with his cravings. To help stave them off he recalled the despair, remorse, anger, self-loathing and the wasted money his addiction had

caused. Hour by hour, day by day and week by week he was growing stronger.

The road to recovery is never smooth, yet Brian was determined to beat the setbacks, constantly repeating: "I won't let it have me. My life belongs to me now, not to cocaine!"

Then came one of the biggest pay-offs for recovering dependents and their counsellors – Brian began to regain his self-esteem.

In the following sessions he talked less about cocaine and more about his feelings and his future. He started to build new relationships. He had new goals to aim for, such as paying off his debts and moving into a home of his own.

Recovering from the lost years

Brian's determination gave him the courage to win through when the going was at its toughest. The lows in his recovery continued but as time went by were fewer and fewer. For the first time in years he was beginning to enjoy the normal things of life such as shopping and trips to the coast. He said that now he could "take a blue day and not run away from it".

Brian still visits Drugline every few weeks. He calls it his "bit of insurance" and says, "better to be safe than sorry". He refers to his 12 years on cocaine as the lost years but now he has developed a broad smile that seems to shine right through both of us.

Names have been changed to protect identities.