

Drugline

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Embracing recovery

Gary's story

The young, charismatic gentleman I see before me today certainly seems to have a lust for life. A far cry from the man who took the brave step to pick up the phone and call Drugline in a desperate plea to get his life and addiction back in control.

This is Gary's story.

Gary is in his 30s, a father of two and divorced. He is the youngest in his family and describes himself as a 'tearaway' in his youth. He didn't take his education seriously but began working as soon as he left school. Despite his rebellious nature, he was extremely anti-drugs and really didn't understand why people used them, although he admits he was always a heavy drinker. Gary was renowned for drinking until he vomited only to continue drinking afterwards.

Yet he never considered this behaviour extreme. In fact, he was totally dismissive when a friend suggested he had a problem with alcohol.

From alcohol to ecstasy

But Gary's life took a turn for the worse when he got involved with a girl who was using ecstasy. One evening she offered him an ecstasy pill and he gave it a try. He said it was a mind-blowing experience. But it was at least a year before he took drugs again. Nevertheless, he continued drinking heavily and during a long break abroad he went on a bender and drank himself into oblivion, behaviour which he himself describes as 'outrageous'.

On Gary's return from abroad, he felt that his life was missing something. So he filled the gap by joining the rave scene and partying hard. His behaviour became more and more bizarre as he combined his heavy drinking with ecstasy and smoked packet after packet of cigarettes each rave night. It all seemed to be such fun at the time.

From ecstasy to amphetamines

Before long the ecstasy led to amphetamines and he became dependent on them. His life began to revolve around drugs. Even when he went abroad he hid a supply of drugs in his luggage.

Next came the health warnings. Twice Gary was admitted to hospital with heart palpitations. He even had a mouth guard made to prevent his teeth grinding as a result of using amphetamines. At one point he actually thought he was going to die. But not once did he even think about giving up the drugs. Instead he used amphetamines more than ever before.

From speed to cocaine

Then he kidded himself. He found the strength to stop using drugs for a short time and got his life together again. But this simply led him to believe that he was stronger than his addiction and that he could use drugs at will and give them up when he wanted. It didn't work out quite like that. He got introduced to cocaine and his life fell apart.

At first he thought he could take it or leave it, although he admits he always enjoyed the cocaine

buzz. So gradually he kept breaking the boundaries and compromising his own morals, thinking it was ok to take that little bit more, until he found himself on a roller-coaster ride to complete addiction. By now he was chasing the buzz and taking as much cocaine as he could get his hands on, never wanting the buzz to stop.

From cocaine to fear

Next his family and job suffered. He became completely unreliable, owing money left, right and centre. Work dried up because he constantly let people down. He avoided opening the post so he didn't have to face up to his debts. His bank accounts were empty yet he still carried on using.

By now he was finding it increasingly difficult to cope with life. Even using drugs seemed to be hard work. He realised he was putting them before his children. This frightened him. He wanted to end it all and became suicidal. Yet even in this state of mind the drugs took control. Giving them up, even by taking his own life, seemed impossible.

From fear to support

Gary rang his sister and opened his heart to her. It was a cry for help. Shaking and crying, he described himself as a total mess, full of shame, guilt and self loathing. He had hit rock bottom, hard.

His sister came straight round to see him. He fell into her arms sobbing. In Gary's words, "She was there for me, I wasn't fighting the battle against drugs alone any more. We phoned **Drugline** together and their support was amazing. We went to **Drugline** that same evening and I spoke to one of their counsellors. It was astounding how I related to him and him to me. His support was like a rock."

Gary says the **Drugline** staff were understanding, non-judgemental and compassionate. The very network he needed to support him with taking the giant steps towards recovery.

From support to freedom

It's now over a year since those horrific times and Gary is still not using drugs. He attends CA (Cocaine Anonymous), NA (Narcotics Anonymous) and **Drugline** is always there for him. With these help networks around him as well as the support of his family and friends he is convinced he can remain clean and drug free.

Today Gary enjoys the highs that life offers. Quality time with his children, relaxing holidays abroad, appreciating living each day free of struggle, being there for his friends and making his family proud.

He appeals to anyone struggling with an addiction – be it alcohol, drugs, tobacco, even food or sex – to be honest with themselves. Because then they too can break the shackles and live a life free from addiction.

Names have been changed to protect identities.