

Jim's Story

Hi, my name is Jim and I'm an alcoholic and an addict.

Here is the shortest version possible of my childhood.

My parents were divorced when I was 8. Wasn't that long ago but divorce was not as common back then. I was the only kid with divorced parents in my entire grade. Thus started my feeling of being different from and less than other children.

Mom left and I was stuck with an abusive father. I consider him to have been an emotional terrorist as well as physically abusive. To give an example of his parenting when I was around 8 my room was messy. I was asked to clean it more than once. I didn't. So he stormed and I mean stormed into my little bedroom and proceeded to rip all the clothes out of my drawers and onto the floor. Did the same thing with my closet. Then threw all my toys into piles on my floor. Then after all that was finished, he smacked me around for a bit.

This was his idea of parenting and I dealt with this type of abuse for many years.

He eventually moved to Florida when I was seventeen and I was then living with my mother for the first time in my life. Being that I never lived with my mother having to go there, the truth is I didn't feel I belonged. Then my drug abuse took root.

It started with weed and cigarettes like so many others. But what I really remember is when I first smoked a cigarette. Boom, that lit me right up. Next was drinking.

A memory that really stands out is concerning one of the first times I was handed liquor to control my nerves. I was 17 and at my girlfriend's house. We were fighting over something trivial but it seemed to go out of hand fast. Her stepfather heard the entire thing and invited me into the kitchen. He started pouring me a diet coke. Then the next thing you know came the rum. The first sip I didn't like. But then came that nice warm, fuzzy and calming feeling. It was absolutely amazing.

For one reason or another, I didn't start drinking too quickly after that. It was a slow start. But I was smoking weed and cigarettes like a chimney.

Then I wanted to join the AirForce, which I did. The recruiter made me quit weed and even suggested drinking as it wasn't tested for. In the meantime, I was drinking gallons of water and cranberry juice to cleanse my system for the drug test. I was also starting to consume whiskey and beer in larger quantities.

I passed the test and got into the AirForce and off to boot camp I went. I obviously was clean during this time which only lasted two months and I was discharged medically.

Second I left that base I was up in smoke again and the moment I got home I went for weed as fast as I could.

This time around I decided to sell weed. That lasted a year or two before I was arrested by the County Narcotics Task Force. Almost went to jail but was lucky and got what they called "Pre-Trial Intervention". Which is essentially your one get out of jail free card.

Then fast forward a few years and around this time I started snorting cocaine. In between, I would also use ecstasy and hallucinogens but that was rare.

At a young age, I was making a good income from a job at a luxury car dealer, had a steady girlfriend, and had gotten my first apartment. This was also the time I was diagnosed with something that required major surgery. So this was my first introduction to painkillers. And boy did I love them! Best of all I was being prescribed them so I was totally "ok" taking them. I also freaked out on someone from the doctor's office so I was also prescribed valium. My first time taking benzos. What an awesome combo.

I remember holding off as long as I could taking my pills during the day so this way at night I would have more to take at once to get a nice buzz.

Once the surgeries were done and I ran out of painkillers, I started buying them illegally. They were not hard to get at all. I was taking "blues" which was 30 mg of oxycodone. Sometimes straight morphine pills depending on what my buddy had. They were everywhere at the time. I know

too many people messed up by that stuff and then moved onto heroin. Some died, including my second cousin.

I took painkillers every night for about two years. When I was home I either had painkillers or I was on the phone trying to find some. Then my girlfriend and I broke up and I went wild partying.

I was taking Klonopin, painkillers, cocaine, and drinking heavily sometimes all in the same night. I was combining all those drugs plus the antidepressants and other drugs I was prescribed for mental health reasons. So I had a lot of chemicals in my system daily for a long time.

Then came the night on main street in Belmar that I crashed my car drunk. I have no recollection of that night. I remember waking up in the morning in jail. The police officer knew me by my first name and was nice to me. I couldn't remember him from the night before. I was blacked out.

Lost my license and my job. Can't sell cars without a driver's license. Then another one of my old addictions took over in the throes of my depression, overeating. I slowly gained weight until I went from 175 pounds to 255 pounds. It was a combination of eating, drugs, and drinking. I looked awful and felt awful.

Then to lose weight I was starving myself and throwing up nearly every meal. Or I wouldn't eat Monday through Friday, only a little beef jerky here and there. Lots of coffee and Adderall to suppress my appetite and keep me going on an empty stomach. I had different ways of losing weight. All terrible for me.

For the next five years, I lived in a fog of depression. Sometimes I was so tight on money I didn't have any left for food when I was done buying my booze and cigarettes. These were what I call the dark times.

Then came a little while where I had quit drinking but that was only because I started sniffing Adderall and taking them daily. I also used to crush up my Klonopin with Adderall and sniff that.

Fast forward a few years. I met a girl. We had an abusive relationship going both ways. I was bad with my drinking and she added flame to the fire that I lit. One night drunk I smashed her phone and scared her enough that she went running from my apartment. I was blacked out drunk and she

was pregnant with my daughter. There I was back in jail. It was my fault and I needed help.

I checked into rehab on March 10th, 2020. When I first got there it was terrible. I had miserable headaches and also the shakes. Worst of all I saw the 12 steps posted everywhere and thought "here we go with the God shit." Then I was handed a pocket-sized edition of the "Big Book". It saved my life. Wow! There was an entire section for agnostics and explained the concept of God *as we understood him*. Those words saved my life. Reading through the book I identified with so much of it I thought it was written about me.

I was admitted to rehab right around the time COVID broke out. Because of that I only stayed a total of eight days. I was afraid of being quarantined there for a long time. So off I go straight back home. I live alone and there is an international pandemic forming. How I haven't completely lost my mind is beyond me.

I had to face living alone with no contact with anyone, the same environment, and staying sober. Everything that a recovering addict shouldn't do I had to do because of the isolation. No meetings. No sponsor. It was a rough go of it at first.

Long story short, every day I make sure I have a routine. My diet has improved. I do this through meditation and truly a cliché thing to say but I just stay calm and positive. I truly have learned to take care of myself for the most part. I know that I will forever be a work in progress.

I've been lucky enough that my craving has been removed. It doesn't bother me to be around alcohol. I'm thankful for that every single day.

I'm now writing this and working on the twelfth step which is passing it on. Carrying the message to the addict that still suffers.