

Acute Training Solutions

Substance Misuse - Talking points

Discuss the following situations.

I just wanted the memories to go away

I was in a relationship with a heroin addict and my ex-husband was causing a lot of trouble for us, I wanted the anxiety to go away so my new boyfriend asked me if I wanted to try heroin to calm me down, little did I know I would get hooked.

After a period of time I ended the relationship. I remember walking with my head covered up with a hoodie, sweating and shaking, I pressed the buzzer at the Direct Access service and started crying. I was put on a Methadone Programme then onto Subutex at The Junction and I have been free from Heroin and Subutex for 3 and a half years now.

Then a year ago I was at work when a man who raped me when I was 16 came in, this was the first time I had seen him since it happened I will be 34 soon. When I got home I fell to bits. I could not leave the house for 2 weeks, the kids were not going to school and I hit the bottle bad even persuaded my neighbours to buy alcohol for me.

I just wanted the memories to go away and to have a good nights' sleep without waking up crying and feeling scared.

My Husband moved back in to help with the kids, as I was suffering with really bad anxiety and depression. I had to leave my job, horrible things had happened to me as a child and I felt my head was going to explode so I drank more. I wanted all the pain to go away. I was very unhappy and did not want to be with my Husband which caused a lot of tension.

Myself and my two youngest had to go to a refuge in Grimsby. My eldest son went to stay with his nana who I did not get on with. This hurt me as I love him so much but I wanted him to feel safe and happy, after years of domestic abuse I had to make a fresh start. This was when I had a break down and tried to take my own life, I couldn't cope. I never had support or guidance as a child and I did not want them to feel abandoned, lost, scared and unwanted like I did. I did not want the kids to go into care so I agreed that their Dad could care for them until I got better.

I hit rock bottom and drinking was all I had to help me get by and help me sleep. I moved back to Scunthorpe to sort myself out and be a Mum again, I moved into a new project where they helped and supported me. This was the first day of the rest of my life!

I have not had a drink for 3 months and I feel amazing. At the end of the Programme my kids will be coming back to live with me. I can then be the Mum they deserve and I want to be. I got lost over the years but now is the time to stop all that, I've got help and support and my children are everything to me. I have counselling to help me deal with the past and I am going through a divorce.

I have support at the Community Alcohol Service and my confidence is growing stronger each day, it will be a new life all round, Recovery!

For the future I hope to be a Volunteer at the service to give something back and use my experience to help others.

Lorraine: My Story

How did it begin?

Looking back I was first introduced to alcohol around the age of seven. The person who gave me the bottle of wine for my birthday was my `abuser` my parents knew he gave me alcohol at such a young age. They did not have a problem with this, and I knew no better.

At most family events during my childhood I was allowed to drink. After years of abuse my abuser was sent to prison. At the age of around 15 my drinking became heavier. I would drink with friends however; I would always drink far more and end up in some right states. I would drink anything I could get my hands on. I would steal alcohol out of my parents bar. Throughout my teenage years I continued to drink alcohol to excess. I managed to hold down a job working on a farm. I would take alcohol to work with me so I could drink during the day. I did not think I had a problem at this time as others around me also drank heavily.

I started to drink before going to work as I started experiencing anxiety and panic attacks. My medicine for this was what I knew best `alcohol`. Even though I was having blackouts I did not realise my drinking was a problem.

I started getting out of control. Others I would normally drink with started making comments. However, they would still buy me alcohol as they would say I was `boring` when I did not drink.

How alcohol affected me

I would get violent towards myself. I would smash my house up when on my own. I would bang my head against the wall. My neighbour's son would hear me kicking off and get his parents to get into my house to calm me down. I had a CPN who my neighbours would call to come and help me.

I recognised drinking the spirits was destroying me. I started to drink lager and stayed off the spirits. I still had my job (don't know how) pay days were difficult for me as I would go out drinking and not know when to stop.

I was not eating which resulted in my partner taking me to hospital where I was put on a drip I had alcohol poisoning. Even this did not stop me drinking, I put my partner through a lot of shit but she continued to support me. After being discharged from hospital I went to see my GP. My GP said I was a time bomb waiting to go off. I was having blackouts which were getting worse.

The worst point for me was setting my house on fire. I could not remember starting the fire. All I remember is being arrested by the police. I was arrested and later released on bail.

I had an appointment to see my CPN who was concerned for my safety at this point. She wanted me to access the Junction to get help with my drinking.

I decided I needed to do something as my life was spiralling out of control. I went to the Junctions direct access service. This was a big step for me; looking back this step would change my life for the better.

My treatment Journey

I was allocated a key worker who was very understanding and did not judge me. I was assessed and put onto medication (antabuse). This medication helped as I knew if I had any alcohol I would end up severely ill. I took the medication for several weeks. I decided to stop taking the medication as the sessions I was having with my key worker helped me to cope without alcohol.

I was still on police bail for arson. However, a couple of weeks later the police dropped the charges. This was another turning point for me. I promised myself I would not end up in a situation like that again.

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Lorraine: My Story cont'd

I engaged with the Junction for the following two and half years. Don't get me wrong some weeks were really difficult I would crave alcohol however; my sessions enabled me to develop coping strategies.

I had also started to feel the benefits of being sober. My anxiety although still bad had improved. My mood improved as did my appetite. People around me commented on how much better I looked. These comments raised my confidence and belief that I could have a good life without alcohol.

Me today

I am four years sober and my life is so much better. I have completed different training courses including, mental health awareness, ICT, maths and English.

I am involved in the client involvement group which I thoroughly enjoy. I am working towards becoming a volunteer. Once I have become a volunteer I can help support others who have problems with drugs or alcohol. I am now using negative experiences in a positive way.

I am a living example that there is light at the end of the tunnel!

I got up and discovered my dad trying to hang himself

I always thought I was going to be a no-gooder

My breakdown started when my dad came home from sea and used to be drunk and I used to see him knock my mum about. They separated when I was about ten and I chose to go and live with my dad because my three siblings stayed with other relatives so my dad would have been on his own.

My dad's job finished and he carried on drinking excessively, leaving me with his friends parents until the early hours of the morning. One night I was already in bed when I heard my dad come in from a nights drinking. As I lay in bed I could hear a gurgling noise so I got up and discovered my dad trying to hang himself at the top of the stairs. I managed to untie him and get him into bed. I pushed his bed against the wall and made mine at the side of his so I would know if he got up. I can remember this like it was yesterday but I have never spoken to my dad about it. After that I spoke to my mum and I ended up in children's home where I stayed for 2 or 3 years before I was found a foster parent at a 'pick a child party'.

My older brother was living with a woman who sold weed and I often used to go there. Eventually curiosity got the better of me and I started to smoke weed.

When I was 16 I moved into the YMCA because my foster placement came to an end. I met some people in the YMCA who were using Ecstasy and whizz. I tried the whizz (speed) once and didn't like it but when I took Ecstasy I felt protected and started using it every day. From there, I started getting introduced to more people at the YMCA, it felt like they were all on their own different drugs.

We would go out and pinch motorbikes and cars together getting into more and more trouble. I got caught with a motorbike and got arrested for the first time. Then I got arrested for driving a car, when I went to court I got a disqualification and a driving endorsement. The next time I was driving a car that the others had pinched and the Police pulled up behind me. I drove off chased by the Police, got caught and was held in the cells overnight to attend court the next morning. I received a 6 month prison sentence and roared my eyes out. I was 17.

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I got up and discovered my dad trying to hang himself cont'd...

When I got released from prison I went to see my brother who was still living with the woman that sold weed. He told me there was a new 'liquid resin' weed out so I said to him 'go get some'. When I first smoked it I was sick and couldn't understand why I was sick from smoking weed. I can remember wondering why my brother never mentioned the liquid resin in front of his girlfriend but I didn't question it at the time.

One time after I had been to see my mum I was going to my brothers friend's house when on the way I started to feel 'not myself' I was thinking what's wrong with me I don't feel normal. I eventually thought, "I bet that's not weed I've been taking." I said something to my brothers friend and explained to him how I felt and he passed me some heroin saying 'just try this'. As soon as I'd had a few lines I felt as though nothing was wrong. I started crying realising I had been smoking heroin and was now addicted. When my brother arrived at the house his friend gave him a whack for what he'd done to me.

From there we both went our own way. I went to Hope Street Hostel and stayed for about 8 days. While I was there I thought, 'I need to get away and do something'. I went down the docks one day and jumped on a boat and asked for some work and was told to come back the next day. By three o'clock the next day I was on that boat with a carrier bag full of clothes and off I went. My life sorted itself out for about 3 years.

When the boat got decommissioned I was then back on land with money, no responsibility, no structure and no path to take. My instant thought was heroin. I started using again and when the money ran out I started shoplifting to fund my habit. I then started using vallis.

When I was using vallis my crime started to get worse. I did 3 street robberies while on valium. I got arrested for hijacking a car - I was a total mess - and got sent back to prison. As daft as it sounds it was a Godsend because that was my eye-opener. I was even hoping for a long sentence so I could get myself together. When I went to court I was remanded in custody. I was on remand for a year in which time I completed a rattle from heroin and got my head round things. In total I got sentenced to 11 years with 6 years to run concurrently. Out of that I ended up doing three years and four months in prison.

The minute I got sentenced I started to mature in my head and then was transferred to the adult side of the prison. At night time I used to sit with a diary and work out, where I was, what I could do and where I was going. This is where I made the choice and decided to get as much out of it as I possibly could. I ended up doing bricklaying, painting and decorating, welding, alcohol awareness and drug awareness courses. I also became a prison listener, which meant I supported inmates who were feeling suicidal or like they couldn't cope because it was their first time in prison. I would be put with the person to support them in their cell until they found their feet.

After I was released from prison I was put on a prolific offenders programme for two years and had to present to probation four days a week and they would come do a home visit and a urine test every Friday. After this programme ended I thought to myself I can do what I want now and I thought I could do heroin 'just the once' and be alright. This wasn't the case and I ended up going to DIP and saw Lynn who was my absolute saviour. From there I went onto Methadone and it just progressed. I last took heroin over two years ago, which was two days before my son was born.

One day, my mum had gone away on holiday and asked me to keep an eye on my brother who was still heavily using heroin. I followed him everywhere including to an appointment at the Junction. I got talking to Hayley who told me about their service user group ASPIRE and I decided to go along to the group.

From the first time I went to the group I felt really welcome and being accepted meant a lot to me. I am now part of the furniture as it is a strong structure for my on-going recovery. ASPIRE has been a major, major part of me being stable and learning new ways to cope with what life throws at me. Hayley has been a big part of this, sometimes I think if I hadn't spoken to Hayley I would have just thrown the towel in. Being a member has opened up new pathways for me like how to find out new information, rather than just leaving things.

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I got up and discovered my dad trying to hang himself cont'd...

I have now been asked to become a Peer Mentor with ADS and have taken the Peer Mentoring training course. My application to be a mentor is being processed now. Never in a million years would I have thought I would have been in this situation. I always thought I was going to be a no-gooder. It means that as a mentor I am given trust and responsibilities which I would never have achieved if I had stayed a user.