

Hello, my name is S.J, and I am an addict.

By the grace of God, and the amazing people around me; I am in long term recovery. As a teenager growing up in Monmouth County, I am sure nobody thought I would be calling myself an addict in recovery. Years ago, I never thought it would be me making such a statement either; I was just a junkie back then.

At some point in my childhood, I realized I was different. I didn't seem to fit in anywhere; even though I had plenty of friends, and always played sports. I never felt "part of." Like most kids that I grew up with, pot was the first drug I had ever tried. To me, the first time I tried pot, it was like all my dreams came true! I now fit perfectly, in any situation, and with any group of people. So long as I had my new best friend, I was set. I Soon began experimenting with alcohol other drugs. When I was 15 years old my cousin overdosed on heroin in my kitchen; I was alone in the house. I was able to keep my cool just enough to get the first responders on the phone and begin rescue breathing. The paramedics arrived, and thankfully my cousin survived. I was a total wreck, lost, and very confused. That night was the first time I ever went on a bender; one that I didn't stop for about 15 years. Things got much worse for me from there, loved ones passed, including my cousin and many others. I am going to stop there with my past and active addiction. My story before recovery is simple. I used drugs all the time, and hurt those closest to me.

The reason that I used drugs is much simpler than anyone would think. The main reason is that I am an ADDICT! Fish swim, birds fly, and addicts... well I am sure you can guess the rest. Another reason that I abused anything that made me feel outside of myself is; I was unable to deal with any emotion. Whether the feeling is good, or bad the result was always the same; I used. I realized these two crucial facts later in life. Thank god it wasn't too late.

This is my favorite part of my story, where I get to tell you all how amazing my life has become since getting clean. I was such a broken man before getting clean, I hated myself, and hated you for not hating yourself. I wanted nothing to do with positive things or people. By the end of my addiction, I wanted nothing to do with anyone; I lived in seclusion and constant fear. I finally got clean in a rehab facility, not the first one I've been to either, jails and institutions became the only environments in which I excelled. After getting the drugs out of my body and clearing my mind for a month, some things started to click in my head, and I began to take life more seriously. I was so broken before; I knew I didn't want to go back to that. So, I made some changes in my life. Firstly, I started going to a therapist, whom I still see; She has helped me a great deal in so many areas of my life. I also received an opiate blocking injection immediately after leaving; giving myself a fighting chance at recovery. That kept me clean long enough to figure out that a drug-free lifestyle is something I wanted. Those two things along with 12-step meetings are crucial to anyone looking to get, and stay clean.

They say that whatever age at which you start abusing drugs; you are basically stuck at mentally until you stop. My amazing Wife will tell you for sure that I sometimes still act like a 15-year child, but that I continue to grow every day. The life I have lived since I got clean is truly beyond my wildest dreams. Family is now at the center of my universe. The Father, Husband, Son, and Brother that I am now is someone that cares, gives 110%, and is mentally and emotionally present. Emotional presence is the best present you can give to someone that you love. I was never able to give that to the people that loved me so much while I was using.

Currently, I'm in college working on my degree; I plan on becoming an LCADC and helping others find recovery. I also volunteer for anything and everything I can, I am so happy to be able to give back to a community that I took so much from in active addiction. Working with The Overdose Prevention Association Corporation has been one of the most incredible and eye-opening experiences of my life. It warms my heart knowing there are people like Paul Ressler fighting for a change in the way we combat this misunderstood disease; Giving a voice to the people who are unable to speak for themselves.

In closing, I would like to make a few points; then you can move on and read the rest of the hope on this site.

I never really used a drug in my life, they all used me.

If you are sick and suffering but have no clue how to get clean: get to a 12-step meeting. There, you will get a hot cup of coffee, a warm hug, and a cold metal chair to hold on to through this incredible journey toward recovery. Once you get there, stay. You will learn something.

If you are using, or live with someone who is, please call TOPAC. Get Naloxone training, and help to save a life possibly. As a bonus, you may get to meet yours truly, since I do some of the training.

Lastly, this disease is taking lives every single day. We need to get this disease out of the shadows and back allies, and into the light. Society has treated addiction like a defect in the moral fiber of one's being, rather than the disease that it is. We all need to come together and spread the word. So talk about it, to whoever. You never know whose life you may save by passing on the information from this site.

I am truly blessed to be where I am right now in life; I thank God, and my family daily.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely,

S.J