

THE BASEMENT PROJECT – MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Name: Alan
Age: 56
Problem: 42 years drugs & alcohol
Clean: Abstinent from drugs
Still using alcohol (16 units per day)
currently attending pre-recovery

WHEN DID YOU START ABUSING DRINK & DRUGS?

My first drink was given to me by an uncle at a party at the age of fourteen. By the age of fifteen I had my first joint and by of sixteen I was spending all weekend, every weekend drinking, smoking dope, speeding and 'tripping' on LSD. And being a 'Hippie' I was looking for as much sex as I could get, protected or not. After Three years of that I met my first wife. After I married I took a good job and ditched the drugs. I became what I thought was a social drinker however, when it came to the weekends I was doing 7/8 pint pub sessions followed by a good few slugs of whiskey when I got home. I had a company car, my own house and too much stress for a twenty one year old. The relationship turned sour and I started to drink through the week as well. I found I couldn't cope with the job any longer and decided to become a singer/songwriter. After quitting the job I joined a blues band and you guessed it! The weed and the speed came back into my life but the drinking slowed again. I was happy for a while but when you are using it just doesn't last does it? By the time I met my second wife I was using weed and speed but little alcohol. My work as a solo singer /songwriter became a place for me and my habits to escape to the stage or the studio. Touring abroad alone suited me fine. This was the beginning of me learning to isolate in TRUE addictive fashion!

After ten years on the road I was beginning to tire of the lifestyle and took a day job.

Again the drugs went out the window but I allowed myself a bottle of red wine on an evening 'cos that's ok isn't it' just to relax you understand.

So, the Monkey was on my back again. We developed a circle of friends after a while, one of whom liked the grass pipe on a weekend, We-hey, so it was "Hi there". (You know the rest) After my mother died, that gave me the excuse to jack up my intake, several years later my dad died and I became an orphan. Who can guess what I did then? yeah! drink some more. I then developed Trigeminal Neuralgia, my doctor in all his wisdom prescribed Tramadol even though I'd asked him for help with alcohol previously. So I was having a joint for breakfast, smoking 20 cigarettes, playing guitar all day and getting smashed on booze, weed and Tramadol!

WHY DID YOU?

I left school at fifteen to become an apprentice mechanic and started drinking to 'be a man among men' along with all the other guys at work. Socially I had a choice of either being a Skinhead (violence was key to being one of those) or becoming a Hippie (passive/drug users) I chose the latter. In my Twenties I decided the stress of being an area sales manager was the root of my problem, boy was I wrong! I promptly packed in the job to become a songwriter and learned what it was like to be poor all over again. The house, the car, everything had to go... even the wife on numerous occasions. When I joined and fronted an R&B band we became quite successful and the repertoire included a lot of my own songs & arrangements. And yeah...they all smoked weed and did the speed! I was in heaven. I was also loving the attention. And of course, because a lot of drunk and stoned fans told me; I thought I was brilliant!

After years of self-abuse I thought I should stop the long tours and get a proper job, this meant giving up weed and amphetamine as that job turned out to driving a truck - and truck drivers only drink! A few years later my mother died and that gave me the excuse to jack up my intake, several years later my dad died and I became an orphan.

Who can guess what I did then? yeah! drink some more, I deserve it, poor me, I am the only orphan in the world.

WHEN DID IT BECOME A PROBLEM?

I suppose it was that first drink. My dad kicked my arse and fell out with his brother over it. I lost my apprenticeship through stealing to buy acid. I threw away a perfectly good career because of alcohol addiction and I blew away my first marriage because I withdrew into nothing more than music, getting stoned, speeding on stage and writing songs.

After ten years of hard touring hard smoking I realized I had hit the self-destruct button a long time ago. My health was deteriorating and I started couch surfing a lot. I knew I was being argumentative with both my second wife and the kids, being completely irrational about anything while in my 'terminal uniqueness'.

WHAT MADE YOU GET HELP?

My wife had been complaining constantly for years about my habits. I was often overly aggressive in my defence as I was in complete denial, creating ways to isolate and drink. I lost interest in sex and a whole load of other things essential to a good relationship and she'd quite simply had enough. On November the 7th last year she declared through many tears that she had found someone else! I was shocked. After she left, a week later I suffered pain and anxiety like I have never known, but, guess what I did that night?

WHY THE BASEMENT PROJECT?

My father in law offered to pay for a clinical detox until I told him how much it costs. The next line inquiry was OnTrack and while I was there I picked up a leaflet that simply said "Are you sick and tired of being sick and tired" I thought "yup, that's me". I phoned Larry Eve that afternoon and we made an appointment to register at TBRP. My first session was a 'Here And Now' facilitated by Steve West. I was pretty nervous but after arriving late (typical addict) I was invited warmly into the group and encouraged to pour out my heart to about 10 or 12 complete strangers, strangers just like me!!! I, being the addict I am, became hooked on this mixture of still suffering and abstinent addicts, these guys had read the book and seen the movie. (*Even made a movie. Ed.)

WHERE WOULD YOU BE NOW?

I would be in the earth or half a kilo of ash.

HOW ARE YOU NOW?

Because of what I have learned through counselling, groups, meetings and the pre-recovery programme I know my life is going to change in a massive way. I also know it's going to be a bumpy ride. I gave up the fags in November, the Tramadol in December and the weed in January. I have made a big reduction in my alcohol intake and I'll beat the bastard! My priority at the moment has to be my recovery. I am a few weeks away from detox and I am planning what I do after that very carefully. I now have a small network of abstinent friends which is growing all the time and I am confident I can get through this and learn to love the guy I have never met for Forty Two years; maybe longer?