

# THE BASEMENT PROJECT – MAKING A DIFFERENCE

## WHEN DID YOU START ABUSING DRINK & DRUGS?



**Name:** David  
**Age:** 29  
**Problem:** 15 years drugs & alcohol  
**Clean:** 8 months

My first drink was at thirteen, you know, the usual experimental stuff; bottles of cider and that sort of thing. My first spliff was not long after that, my “dealer” being a guy in my form at school. We all used to hang around in a gang, there were about fifteen of us and you would just find us loitering by the subway near school or by the local graveyard. By the time I was fourteen I was smoking weed pretty much every night – and drinking too. I seemed to be able to cope with schoolwork, football etc, but slowly I started to decline. I gave up the football, my judo lessons and I became pretty lazy. I knew of other people who did drink and drugs, my older sister being one, and an older mate too. So me and my gang didn’t seem to be any different. I guess there was some hidden desire to be a “bad boy” and impress.

The week before my fifteenth birthday we were all on about going to a club, that was the in-thing to do. I was offered an ‘E’ (MDMA, Ecstasy). I remember being pretty hesitant, it wasn’t an immediate “yeah ok, let’s have it” but there was a fair bit of peer pressure. Well that was when my freedom of choice disappeared. It unleashed a dragon. That was it for me. It seemed like this was what ‘doing drugs’ was all about. The feelings of euphoria were amazing; it took me away from everything, I didn’t have a care in the world. But little did I know at the time that I would spend the next fifteen years chasing that first hit.

## WHY DID YOU?

I guess I wasn’t happy with who I was really. I wanted to be something or someone else. My older sister and brother were hanging around with people that I guess your Mr and Mrs average wouldn’t have mixed with. Little did I know back then that the addict within me wanted a piece of that; the drugs, the alcohol, the chaos and the lifestyle of the bad boy on the club scene. By mixing more with these types of people the more I got, the more I got, the more I wanted.

I guess I was an addict before I ever had a drink or drug. I didn’t know who I was or who I wanted to be, I always wanted to be someone else, but didn’t know who. The drugs and booze gave me that. They were the escape from reality. The escape from me.

## WHEN DID IT BECOME A PROBLEM?

That’s a good question. I guess looking back it was always a problem. I couldn’t do drink or drugs socially. I couldn’t just take them or leave them – I just took and took. But I do remember my Grandma coming back from America and being admitted into hospital with pneumonia where I went to visit her. It’s a dark and horrible memory seeing her in a hospital bed. Shortly after she was released and we had a party for her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. She was still ill and not long after she passed away.

I think this had a massive impact on my, by now, regular cocaine use. I was about 25 or 26. I was using regularly spending £240 on a weekend getting off of my face, plus drinking on top of that. I carried a lot of guilt because my Grandma was a victim of my addiction. I had stolen pension money from her purse and even nicked her keys to the house with the intention of stealing and selling her jewellery, luckily I didn’t sell anything and managed to return it all, with the keys. These are mistakes I will have to live with but mistakes I have come to terms with through doing the 12-steps. I am sorry for what I did and I know my Gran will understand I was also a victim of my addiction.

I managed to keep my job down through all of my using, don’t ask me how as I have no idea, other than perhaps I had been doing it so long and was just on automatic pilot. I have heard many other people say similar of their jobs too.

I carried on like this until about 2009 and that’s when I was introduced to MKAT (Methadone), THE drug that was to take over once and for all. By this I mean unlike all the other drugs I had done; speed, ecstasy, cocaine, alcohol etc., while you do feel some kind of emotion while taking them, MKAT to me, is like cocaine, ecstasy and speed all rolled into one. It made me, from what I am told, a cold shallow and calculated person, I just remember like being a zombie, not a care in the world, the best escape from reality that I’d ever had. And I loved it. What was I trying to get away from? Yeah good question. Me I guess. I didn’t like me. Didn’t like where I was, didn’t like my family, my friends, I was still grieving for my Gran. I had left a lot of carnage behind me through my using career. I just didn’t like who I had become.

## WHAT MADE YOU GET HELP?

I know what you're thinking now... you're thinking I started all this because I wasn't happy with who I was, and now I'm at the point where I'm not happy with who I had become. Well that's the insanity of addiction – doing the same things over and over and expecting different results. Sure, on a small scale I was doing different drugs and getting different effects but in the bigger picture, life, I was just going around in circles. I had had enough, as the saying goes, I was sick and tired of being sick and tired, or sick and tired of being tired and sick.

## WHY THE BASEMENT PROJECT?

It was my sister, Sarah who found the project. A great find and a life-saving one at that. I do think that at the time she found it I already wanted to stop but I just didn't know how. If I'm honest I remember having the thoughts of "here we go again", someone else telling me to go on an adventure weekend, keep a drink diary etc. Perhaps if we helped you get off the drink then you would stop the drugs... I had heard all that stuff before. But this time I was wrong, this was different, it felt different. I left my assessment with feelings of hope and feeling different in myself.

For me, all the staff at the Project work tirelessly to help people back from the depths of their addiction, they're brilliant.

## WHERE WOULD YOU BE NOW?

I dread to think where I would be right now. It puts the fear of God in me. I know I wouldn't be here right now. I'd either be dead or in some gutter taking MKAT, probably dead actually as I had reached the point of being sick and tired of being sick and tired, I had tried overdosing with MKAT.

## HOW ARE YOU NOW?

I am a different person altogether. I'm that person I was trying to be all those years ago. I now have a life worth living, one I feel worth living. I have my freedom of choice back. Getting help from The Basement Recovery Project has not only given me a safe place to live (Freedom House) but has also enabled me to go back to college where I am studying Health and Social Care. I volunteer at the Project, passing on my strength and hope to others coming through the door, just as was offered me. I attend mutual aid groups and am going through the 12-steps which is having a massive impact on my recovery.

Don't get me wrong, it's not been a bed of roses. This recovery stuff is hard but it's well worth it. People say it's me that's done the work and listened to and followed the suggestions that's got me well and where I am today, but for me, it's a lot more personal than that. If my sister Sarah and her husband Sam hadn't found the Project I wouldn't be here now, so I thank her for that, and thanks too to the rest of my family and to two of my close friends Susie and Mark. But most of all I would like to thank my peers and staff at The Basement Recovery Project as I am now living a life that I never imagined possible.