

THE BASEMENT PROJECT – MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Name: Helen (name changed)
Age: Mid 40's
Problem: 20 years drinking
Clean: 18 months

WHEN DID YOU START DRINKING?

I can't remember exactly when it started as through my teenage years it wasn't part of my life. I was just a social drinker and enjoyed going out. I even met my husband in a pub in town. Every now and then I got a bit fresh but it didn't interfere with my life. I held down a decent job, got married, enjoyed moving into our first home and starting a new chapter in my life, I suppose I was like a lot of people. However, I had no idea what my new chapter had in store...

WHY DID YOU?

After two years I was pregnant with a much wanted child, I was still a 'social drinker' so I didn't drink during my pregnancy. After giving birth to a healthy baby boy, eight weeks later he had a sudden illness which proved to be near fatal. As a result of the illness my son has been left profoundly handicapped and has extremely high round-the-clock nursing needs. I didn't enjoy living in hospital (and still don't to this day), but amongst the stress of looking after my son and fighting for needed specialist care, a drink at the end of the day seemed a way of relaxing. There were no rule books on bringing up a severely handicapped baby, I couldn't turn to my mum as others could, nobody really knew how to cope, but I had to. One thing led to another and at some point I had crossed that invisible line from drinking socially to becoming dependent.

WHAT MADE YOU GET HELP?

I lost my dad, and my mum was taken ill during a holiday which left her handicapped and needing constant care. I still had my boy to look after too. I know people will say this is an excuse (of course there is much more to my story that I could never put in writing), but to me drinking was a mental block, a crux, a confidence builder. Drinking had also turned to the lying. The cheating. The confidence breaker. The second class citizen and then... rock bottom.

I became very ill, went yellow, thin and couldn't eat. I ended up in hospital where I slipped into a coma. I nearly died twice. The hospital didn't really know what was wrong with me, they just kept me from slipping away. After a long period in hospital, I was able to leave, although I could barely walk and needed occupational therapy / physio input.

WHY THE BASEMENT PROJECT?

It was something one of the nurses said to me; "You're an alcoholic, you need help" she said. I couldn't believe it. Me? An Alcoholic? I remember one of my friends saying "You were not in a very nice place." The nurse arranged for someone to come see me from The Basement Project; they did an assessment and invited me to attend their Recovery Programme. I managed to make it to meetings and thanks to them; here I am to tell my story.

WHERE WOULD YOU BE NOW?

I think that is quite easy to answer, though it's hard to comprehend the severity of drinking. To put it bluntly, I would be dead.

HOW ARE YOU NOW?

When I came out of hospital I had been made physically well enough to manage at home, but it's thanks to The Basement Project and the Recovery Programme that has allowed me to make more sense of the nature of my addiction and how it has affected my whole life. After eighteen years of drinking, I've not had a drop since.

I am, and always will be, eternally grateful for the help and support of family and friends for having belief in me and enabling me to get back on track. It's down to The Basement for putting me on the right track.