



Name: Rita (name changed)
Age: 29
Problem: Drinking since 14
Clean: 9 months

WHEN DID YOU START DRINKING?

I was 14 when I started drinking. Would drink at school with my mates. Yeah I know what you're thinking, "school?", but it's true. To be honest it was mostly after school closed, but there were times when I would turn up to lessons stinking of alcohol.

WHY DID YOU?

Well it gave me confidence, made me more comfortable and in general just made me feel good. Of course my friends did it too, so it just seemed something you did. We all had a good laugh together, hanging around with some of the older lads and going for rides in their cars, being abusive to the general public and I guess just making a nuisance of ourselves. We were the typical abusive, unruly kids. My friends grew out of the habit. They went on to college and university and before I knew it I was 19 and drinking very heavily, trying to get any dead-end job I could just to finance my drinking, and by that time some drugs too.

WHEN DID IT BECOME A PROBLEM?

Now that's a good question, and if I were honest and able to look back, as I can now that I am sober, it was probably a problem long before I physically took my first drink. I have never talked about my life before the drink, so here goes. Mum didn't want me and my sister so Dad brought us up since I was one. When I was nine, my sister and I were reacquainted with our mum who was now remarried, and I found I had a step-brother. He was a year younger than me. My sister and I would do anything to please mum, just for her to be a part of our lives again. We wanted her to love us like she did our step-brother. So when he started to sexually abuse me the last thing I could do was tell mum. I couldn't tell anyone for fear of losing my mum again. She favoured him, would buy him things and we would get second best. Little things just showed us we had to try please mum. Turning up to meet her at work we would ask if mum was there, nobody knew who we were. Why didn't they know who Mum's children were?

We had no choice but to go to mums and ended up going every weekend and then during school holidays. As the abuse from my step-brother continued, I continued to drink. The more I drank the less I could remember.

WHAT MADE YOU GET HELP?

My step-brother moved out and I ended up living with mum. My drinking had gotten worse over time and I became abusive toward my mum – I had a lot of resentments. But in the last year before she died of lung cancer, we seemed to get on just like any mother and daughter relationship. But my drinking was so bad, I was drunk the night she died.

My life seemed to get worse, I was out of control. I was carrying on drinking even though I now had a daughter to look after. I couldn't even look after myself and was so wrapped up in my own misery and selfishness that I tried to take my own life. This time (yeah I had done it before, more cries for help I guess), I woke in intensive care.

WHY THE BASEMENT PROJECT?

It was Social Services who suggested I tried The Basement Project. They had referred me to the local Substance Misuse Service before but all the help I got was to try cut down my drinking. I couldn't. So I went along to The Basement thinking what can these people do for me that nobody else can? Within five minutes, I was being asked if my drinking was related to the sexual abuse. WOW, I had never thought about it in that way. These people knew more about me than me! I attended the Basement Recovery Programme which gave me a better understanding of addiction and why I can't just drink in moderation. I have never had a drink since.

WHERE WOULD YOU BE NOW?

In a slutty bedsit somewhere, not dead. I recon I had until I was 33 until the drink killed me, don't know why I thought that, but I wasn't going to get to 33 and die. My kids need me, and I want them to have the life I never had.

HOW ARE YOU NOW?

I'm good, I'm in a good place. I've not had a drink for over 9 months. Even though I am doing this for myself, you have to do it for yourself, I do want people to be proud of me. I have piece of mind, something that I never thought I would find, in fact, if I think about it I'm not even sure I knew it existed. I am massively in debt, something I would have drank on in the past (and made the debt worse), but now I don't worry about things like that. Of course I have the responsibility for paying it back, and I will, but worrying about it unnecessarily won't get me anywhere.

I have a future to live for, and I embrace it every day. I am currently on an Access course at college hoping to attain A 'Levels that will get me to university where I'm hoping to do a degree course in criminology.

I am a lot more outgoing, confident person, and hey, I even enjoy my own company. My story above is all in the past, it's not forgotten but it no longer rules my present day. I live on life's terms and enjoy every minute.

