



Making recovery visible

In Sheffield we know that there are 100's if not 1000's of untold stories (often shared in closed groups) that the general population don't get to hear about. Sheffield Recovery Forum is STILL on a mission to change that.

Tracey Ford

I was 22, I was a mum of 2 kids, I had been involved in selling drugs before I started to use them myself. It started with a little dab of speed here and there, but before I knew it, I was caning just under quarter of an ounce a day. I was always on the go, I had a job I loved working in the markets, i got skilled at buying and selling stolen goods as well as the drugs, life seemed ok, of course I was in total denial.

What was life like for you at rock bottom?

I'd started losing weight, family members expressed their concerns but I brushed them off, I knew deep down that this couldn't go on forever, I was starting to turn up late for work, I started to become forgetful, I knew something wasn't right, I knew deep down that the Speed wasn't helping and yet I could stop.

What was the turning point for you?

I was admitted to Middlewood Hospital, unbeknown to be, I had developed drug induced psychosis, I was convinced I could smell the devil, I remember burning every item that I had acquired illegally trying to purify, cleans myself. I was slowly losing my mind and then one day, my body started to slow down.

I still remember it as if it was yesterday. It was like someone was turning the volume down in my head, I was aware of everything happening around me, but I couldn't speak out, I was a prisoner in my own body. I didn't trust anyone, not even my own family, I had, had enough and I am ashamed to admit that I did consider ending my life on a couple of occasions.

What helped?

Being away from my home environment, away from everything that caused me stress or pain, afforded me the time to really look at myself. With the support from staff and counselling sessions in the hospital I started to realise just how bad things had got and I knew I had to change.

But if I'm honest I didn't know where to start, I'd never seen myself as an addict, I'd never been referred to any drugs services, I ended up leaving the father of my kids, I received a lot of support from family and a CPN nurse, who encouraged me to go back to college, to find a purpose. I started to differentiate the between who were my friends, who had my best interest at heart and those who were associates, people who would use me and over the years I have developed friendship with the unlikeliest people.

One of the biggest lessons I have learned from this journey and my experience with using drugs has been to always be honest with myself and take full responsibility for my actions. To not rely on others or drugs to fix how I am feeling, because I now have the self-awareness and personal insight to help myself.

What is life like now? How are things different?

I am the same person, but I am also very different at the same time. It's taken some years, but I am finally in a place where I like myself. Growing up I always felt like the odd one out or misunderstood but now a days, I am happy and content in my own skin.

I practice self-compassion on a daily basis, treating myself with the same kindness, gentleness, and acceptance that I extend to others. I now recognise that life is about accepting that falling short or being average is simply part of being human, and therefore unavoidable and that none of us are perfect and that's ok.

I have been in a loving relationship for the past 20+ years with someone who gets me, including my flaws, my children have grown into amazing women, with their own families and jobs. I have found a new love for writing, my grammar is crap and I often need assistance from Grammarly, I have my own blog page called www.shithappens.me.uk and am currently working on a book. This is something I would never have dreamed about years ago.