



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.

Lesley Thompson

What was life like for you at rock bottom?

After three detoxes and relapses, I was beginning to wonder if I had even got a rock bottom. Life was like a living hell, and I often wondered if I hadn't suffered enough or if I'd be better off dead. It took another five years before I finally let go of the drink. Looking back, I now realised that I was scared to let go, because to let go is to feel, and I didn't want to feel.

What was your turning point for you?

Admitting that I was an alcoholic, I still couldn't recognise or accept that to myself even after all the previous detoxes. I was holding onto to so much pain, my GP had been tremendous, and after various counselling sessions, it was apparent that my troubles were much more in-depth. I was referred to VIDA therapy services in October 2018.

I started my therapy but was still in active addiction, and even though it was challenging, I began to open up, but it also exacerbated my drinking, which was out of control. The PTSD therapy had opened the gates of hell, but it had also set me free, and I was able to surrender, accept and say those three words I had never been able to say 'I'm an alcoholic'. And again 'I am an alcoholic' no ifs no buts, no maybes! For me, the word Alcoholic is an ugly word, but it was time to get honest. I talked to my kids, but they already knew that I was an alcoholic and they encouraged me to go back to the GP, I was nervous, but he didn't tilt his head in disappointment or judge me, he asked how he could help.

I was referred to Sidney street, where they explained that the detox would take some time, but I didn't have time. My Mum had been diagnosed with a tumour on the back of her tongue. She was 75 years old. And even though our relationship had never been great, (I couldn't love her as I should because of childhood traumas and her unloving ways) she had always supported me through every detox, and here I was, I wasn't in a fit state to support her in her hour of need. Waiting for the detox seemed to take forever, I wasn't even sure if my body could physically take another detox. I kept a drink diary, trying to reduce my alcohol intake, but it wasn't happening fast enough. Mum was eventually taken to Western Park.

What was the turning point for you cont?

Having to go there every day was painful. My Mum looked terrible, but I looked like I needed the bed more than her, I was drunk every time I went to visit, not to get drunk but I needed to drink to stop my body from shaking. I remember my Mum telling me to go home because I stank of drink, it broke my heart the state I was in, but it was out of my hands.

She was in the hospital for ten days before she passed (I think), I wasn't even there, either too consumed with being selfish and ashamed that she had to see this way. And it wasn't just her I was ashamed that my boys had me for a mum. I didn't deserve their love and hope they had for me, it was an awful time, my Mum's funeral came and went, and the hatred I felt for myself was unbearable. I still cannot recall the day mum died or her funeral date without looking it up in my diary. It took three months before I was ready to do my home detox. On the 9th of September 2019, I started, I was lucky to have a partner who would give me the medication I needed daily. The next three weeks, I was in what I can only describe as being a complete blur swinging in a state of delirium and coma that I don't ever want to feel again.

What is life like now? How are things different?

It is good. I have good and bad days, talk about everything, try different things, and learn to love myself importantly. I get involved in groups and realising that I am finding all the answers I wished I'd had years and detoxes ago. I am building my confidence, my self-esteem, but more importantly, self-worth.

I've recognised that the crucial part of my recovery was the help that I got from VIDA, it has shown me that with the right treatment and therapy we can live a fruitful and happy life. I'm starting to heal from within, I want to share with services how as addicts we sometimes feel failed, because we don't always know what's wrong with us, or why we are using, but given the right assistance and support it can be done.

I am reading self-help books in readiness for further counselling. I also support other service users by either listening, going for a walk, giving a little inspiration to look inside themselves, encouraging them to work out the puzzle of addiction that we have a good chance of recovery, and the opportunity to feel loved and valued. I want to speak up on behalf of other service users, who haven't yet found their voice.

Thank you for reading

Lesley x