

Tammy's Story

Hello my name is Tammy and I'm an alcoholic ..

I started drinking when I was about 13 - with my mates, whenever we had the opportunity. Straight away I loved the feeling of escape it gave me and from the start, whenever I drank, I drank to excess. I was never one to think "Oh I'm feeling a bit woozy now, I'll stop" It was all or nothing. I was unable to control how much I drank once I started. This inability to control how much I drank lasted right up until the end of my drinking and I know now that this is a trait of alcoholism. Clubbing and partying was a huge part of my life and I literally "lived for the weekend". What accompanied the weekend though (and the weekdays when I had the opportunity to drink) were some harsh consequences - blackouts, arguments, fights and putting myself in very dangerous situations were all commonplace. My studying was affected, then my work, my relationships were affected, my life was going down a path that I hadn't expected and so when I was 20 I went to an AA meeting. Everyone was lovely and friendly and I shared about how my inability to control my drinking and the consequences was messing up my life. I went to a few more meetings after that but truthfully, what I wanted was to be able to control the amount I drank and to stop acting like such a total prat when I'd been drinking. I now know that I was asking the impossible. My partner at the time said things to me like "Oh but surely you aren't going to stop for good, drinking is a huge part of your personality" and "You're way too young to be an alcoholic" and I guess that was all the encouragement I needed to stop going. I told myself that being as I'd gone to a few meetings at a young age, it meant that I'd "Nipped it in the bud". I was different to the people there. I would be able to control it now. I was cleverer than them. I heard stories in the meetings of people who had lost so much and I thought "No way would I let a drink in a bottle bring me to my knees". I honestly believed I'd fixed myself. I couldn't have been more wrong! At the time I didn't know that alcoholism is a progressive disease and progress it did. Over the years I continued drinking more and the consequences got worse and worse. I had brief periods where I'd seem to get it together for a while but then it'd spiral again and always worse than before. I kidded myself that I could stop when I wanted. I told myself I was just a young party girl having fun. I believed I was the smart one, wanting to party all the time - "Isn't that what life is all about?" I told myself. I missed out on a lot of life by thinking this. I ended up being unable to hold a job down because my mental health was in a terrible state - something I can now attribute to the amounts I was drinking, and by the time I was 35 I was drinking in the mornings, something I said I would never do became normal to me. I could barely leave the house by this point, I was so anxious all the time and the more I drank the worse I got, even though I tried to tell myself constantly that the alcohol was making me feel better! This denial of what was happening could have killed me. I started to have alcoholic psychosis and saw and heard things that weren't there. It was a very very frightening time. My relationships were in tatters. I'd hurt a lot of people very badly through my drinking. My physical health had been ravaged by alcohol too (in 2017 I had to have both of my hips replaced - I had a disease in them that was caused by my previous excessive alcohol consumption). At the start of 2015 I was so poorly I ended up in residential rehab for 3 months and that's where I started back at AA. I haven't taken an alcoholic drink since that point. Life today is better than I could have hoped for. I went into rehab just hoping not to die, but thanks to AA and the 12 step programme of recovery I have peace of mind today, the painful anxiety and the debilitating depression are not there. Don't get me wrong early recovery was difficult as I was learning to live without my constant crutch and life still has it's difficult times, but at no point anymore do I want to drink. Which for someone who, in the end, couldn't go 24 hours without alcohol is a real-life miracle! The 12 steps have given me a way to live which mean I don't need alcohol. A healthy way to navigate life really. AA has given me so much more than not wanting or needing to drink. I have a good life today, I have made some of the best friends possible, my mental health is the best it's been my whole adult life, I am able to help people today, I laugh today - a lot! But most of all, I can put my head on the pillow at night with a clear conscience and some peace in my heart.

If I'd stuck around when I first went to AA. If I'd truly listened to what people said instead of thinking that I was the clever one, I feel sure that things wouldn't have got so bad for me and for those I love. I lost many years of normal, healthy, happy living through my own ego telling me I was better than the people who had got sober! AA has given me back everything that alcohol took from me - and then some!

I am so very grateful for the life I have today.