

Claire's Story ...

Growing up I never felt right in the world, everyone else seemed to get along fine in life, but for me it was different, inside I felt like I did not fit in. I tried changing myself to fit in with groups of friends, but still something was missing.

I started drinking when I was 12, but drank more often from 15. I was hanging around with friends older than me and going to house parties most weekends, lying to my parents about where I was staying. All of my friends drank on the weekend so I did not think it was unusual, they were 18 and I was 15. I always drank more and for longer than them, and I always felt ten times worse than them the next morning.

I continued feeling out of place in the world. Be-time I was 18 I had been in many dodgy relationships and friendships, upset my parents numerous times and was drinking more and more. I was going out clubbing with my boyfriend at the time regularly and I was always up for a party. I had stopped caring about anything or anyone, including myself, even though I always did care deep down I had become almost numb with the life I was leading.

I am not entirely sure how my drinking got so bad, I started an apprenticeship and then started drinking every night after work with my work colleagues, going to the nearest nasty pubs and clubs. At some point, where I drank and when I drank seemed to lose importance, as long as I could get as much drink down me as possible. I always wanted more drink, it was never enough. I used to 'minesweep' (stealing others' drinks off the side) when clubbing as money was tight. I always thought the way I behaved and drank was normal, but then I started finding myself in dangerous situations. I began to have blackouts during my drinking night and started getting very upset the morning after my drinking. I confided in my Mum who suggested I might be an alcoholic and may not be able to stop drinking. I tried to stop, but suddenly found I couldn't. It was the scariest feeling in the world.

I was introduced to the Alcoholics Anonymous book through a family member who was already in A.A. I managed to stay off the drink for a month, then I became scared I was going to start drinking again so I got myself to an A.A. meeting. I was so scared going to my first meeting, my first meeting was fine someone came up to me and spoke to me once I had sat down. I can't remember much from my first meeting, I was very anxious and scared. After 6 months, I asked someone what a sponsor was and then asked someone to sponsor me into the 12 step programme of A.A.

I have been sober for 4 years now, I was 19 when I stopped drinking and I am now 23. I don't think about drinking, or want a drink and my life is great. I love my family and can be helpful to them, we go out for meals and walks regularly. I have started university in sobriety, learnt to drive, I have fantastic long-term friendships and relationships with others. But most importantly I can be by myself and be happy, I no longer need to escape from my own head, I have peace today thanks to A.A.