

One Woman's Story

I am an alcoholic. I went down fast. I could have lost everything. This is my story.

I did not drink in high school. I did not drink in college until they lowered the legal age limit when I was about 20. Even so, I drank only sparingly because I did not like the taste nor did I like to be out of control. In law school I drank "socially", although now, in retrospect, I can remember a few times when once I started drinking, I drank excessively, to the point that the next day all I could stomach was white bread and a coca-cola.

Still, I had not crossed that line.

When I was in my thirties I went through a bitter divorce and custody battle – which I lost. I was devastated. My faith in the legal system was seriously damaged. My humiliation was almost unbearable – only "bad women" lost custody of their children. What had happened to my lawyer's assurances that there was "no way" I would lose custody? I was, and always had been, a good mother.

I began to drink. Life was too unbearable to face. I was ok at the office where I could keep busy with client matters. But once I left for home it was different. The absence of my children was torture.

The ONLY way I could cope was to dull the pain, and the only way I knew to do that was with alcohol. It became my friend, and I crossed that invisible line.

Alcohol was my friend through a new marriage and birth of a child. I struggled to maintain a "safe" drinking level while pregnant, and can remember how furious I was with my husband that he could drink as much as he wanted. Time passed. One of my saddest memories is of taking my then two-year-old into the liquor store at least twice a week so I could get my box wine (you know, if you drink that stuff you can't tell how much you are drinking). I was actually two years' sober before I realized that the dull headache I had been waking up with each morning when I was drinking was a hangover. Talk about denial!

I knew I had a problem with alcohol for a long time before I was willing to stop. For one thing, driving around at 10:00 on a Saturday morning with a tiny Dixie cup of wine is a pretty telling circumstance. Every morning I would say to myself, "I won't drink today", but within 15 minutes of being home from work, I had that glass of wine in my hands. I COULD NOT STOP.

Finally, I simply asked God to relieve me of the desire to drink, and He did. I

actually felt the lifting of a heavy weight from my body. That was April 15, 1990.

Did life miraculously change at that point? Of course not. But in sobriety, by working the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, by seeking counseling, by prayer and meditation, my life has been immeasurably graced. I have acquired the tools necessary to live life on life's terms, even when life's terms are pretty bad. I have learned to live in the day, to enjoy it, to be grateful to God, and to know that I am not in the driver's seat. And one of the best blessings of all - the children I lost were restored to me many years ago.

Alcohol nearly destroyed me, and would have destroyed my career eventually. By the time I stopped drinking I was starting to suffer some memory difficulties associated with alcohol abuse. A lot of my mental functioning has been restored, but I am sure I have done irreparable damage to many brain cells. But, I must honestly say that alcohol also has brought me into a relationship with God that I might never have had, were it not for the complete surrender that I had to undergo in order to begin to live life again. I am today a grateful, recovering alcoholic. ■



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