

SAVED BY A HIGHER POWER

I AM A RECOVERING METH ADDICT. I WAS BORN AND RAISED IN PORTLAND, Oregon, the middle child between two sisters. My father was in prison for most of my childhood, and my stepdad grew pot and sold cocaine, but I was too young to really know what was going on. As far as I knew, I thought I had a normal home.

When I turned 8, I drank for the first time. I drank until I was drunk—I didn't want to keep drinking, but I was forced to by a relative. I remember waking up with a terrible headache, thinking I would never do that again. That same year, I was sexually abused by another relative.

I also experimented with marijuana. Yet another relative stole a quantity from his father while we were out camping, and we smoked all day long. I remember the way I felt while smoking it. It made me lazy. We had planned to pick mushrooms for cash, but obviously we didn't make lots of money while smoking pot.

My dad was released from prison when I was about 12, and I went to live with him in another town. He was into drinking and using. At one point I remember my dad hallucinating, saying that there were ladies in his room. He actually got my uncle and me to believe it. Wow.

I tried crank for the first time around 14. I couldn't fit in at my dad's or mom's places, so I ran away. I drank regularly, and the woman whose house I was staying at offered me a line. I did it, and half an hour later I

went crazy with energy. I got on a bike and rode 20 miles. Over time we did more, and I started to like it even better.

After some time, I moved back in with my dad. We lived in an arcade in a small town; it was a major place for users because there really wasn't much to do in the town. My dad didn't want me using crank, so he told all of his friends not to let me have any. But one of his friends let me try some one night anyway, and I washed our sidewalk for nearly four hours. That was a very experimental time for me. I used LSD and anything else I got my hands on.

At 15, after many expulsions, I was kicked out of school for the last time. I moved back to Portland. I still used crank every chance I could: I started smoking it off of aluminum foil or from homemade glass pipes. I lived in a house where we cooked and sold it. I used almost every single day—when I wasn't high I slept for days on end. I remember staying up so long I started to hallucinate. It was my first meth-induced psychosis. I saw people in a park spying on us.

I did anything to get crank—stole anything from anyone. Once, I got involved in a high-speed police chase in a stolen truck. We wrecked and almost killed the driver of the other car. I did some really stupid stuff. I started to notice chunks of my teeth falling out and didn't know why. I remember using crank with my dad and his wife. I hit some major lows at that point. I went to a shelter for homeless children where I actually got clean for a little while.

A little later, I moved downtown. I was off crank, but I sold pot and LSD to make a living. I got with a young lady and we moved in together. We sold pot but eventually got busted. I had to go cold turkey from all drugs for probation. I stayed clean until I was off paper.

During one graveyard shift, one of the other bosses asked me if I wanted a line. I said yes and started up again, slowly this time. I had to make sure it didn't get out of hand. I thought I could control my using, but I was fooling myself. After that I used when my girl and I fought, or behind her back. She didn't use meth and had a bad history with her parents' using. Pretty much every weekend I ran away and used. I started using even when I was with her, but I'd stop at a certain part of the day so I could try to

sleep with her at night. It was so hard to make myself go to sleep—for years I used breathing techniques, hoping she wouldn't feel my heart beating out of my chest.

One day, I went to get some crank from a usual source but the only thing they could give me was crystal. I said if it did the same thing, then that was fine. I got it and loved it—crystal was my new drug of choice. A lot of time passed after that, but I have few memories. Well, I do remember some of the crazy things that come with crystal but I don't wish to glorify them here. I will say that we sat and stared out of windows or at camera monitors for hours. What insanity.

Seven years later, my daughter was born while I was off in the woods trying to get clean and sober. I was all alone and thought that would help. One night I heard people yelling my name in the middle of the woods, saying, "Your daughter was born!" I missed it. My little girl had arrived, and I wasn't there. I left everything and went directly to the hospital. I changed her first diaper, and we took pictures of me doing it.

The next year, I got a DUI for meth. I was cheating on my daughter's mother regularly. I fell into my second meth-induced psychosis and ended up in jail with some pretty nasty drug charges. I started DUI treatment, but I wasn't willing to work the program. Soon after, I experienced my third psychosis, by far the worst. I planned on killing a lot of different people—one of them a church pastor. I asked my family for help, but there really wasn't much they could do for me. They took me to the hospital.

I finally left my daughter's mother for a woman I used with—I thought I was better off with a meth addict, because I wasn't being judged. I wanted to keep living my life without being forced out of the insane activities of meth addiction. We moved out of town, and everything was fine for a while. My girlfriend and her son used meth. I wanted to show them how to do it for free, so I spent the money I saved and bought a quantity—and started to sell it again. I honestly wasn't thinking about what always happens. Eventually I found myself at a computer desk, smoking meth and tweaking every day. Right as I got tired of the anxiety, I caught wind that we were going to be busted. I wanted a way out. I prayed to God, "Please help me get out of this situation." The next day the police raided my home and arrested me.

As I sat in that jail cell I realized that God had released me from my addiction—he had given me a way out. After I got booked, I found a copy of the New Testament in my cell. I started to read it and found that if I read for thirty minutes, I could get to sleep. I started praying while I read it. I figured that my life was starting to change. I didn't want to use, lie, cheat, steal, or anything I used to do.

When I got out of jail, keeping my new goals wasn't such an easy task, even though I still read the Bible and prayed. I started to attend CMA meetings, but I started drinking to replace the crystal. I found myself in some pretty terrible places at times because I was homeless. Every once in a while I ended up at the bar drinking—a violation of my probation. Someone would ask me to do a tattoo for him; I'd tell him I was too drunk. Some drinks later I'd tell him that, if he bought me some crystal, I could sober up enough to do the tattoo. I must remember my ABCs: Alcohol Becomes Crystal. This happened about three times. Each time I wanted to stop feeling dirty from crystal, but at the same time I wanted more.

I still associated with the wrong people. I was about to graduate from another drug treatment program and was working a full-time job, but I was staying with a friend who was still an active addict. There were lots of other active users around. I still thought that drinking was okay as long as I didn't use meth. My last night around the users, they were plotting a crime. I'm grateful I'd found my Higher Power before then, because otherwise I would have been right there with them. They asked me if I wanted to help, but I said, "Hell, no." They were all arrested and told the police I was involved. I knew then these people weren't the type I wanted to be around anymore. I ended up back in jail on a parole violation for drinking—which I admitted to. While I was in jail this time, I attended church, Bible study, and AA meetings. I never got much out of that stuff before, but now I liked them all.

My clean date is the day I was arrested—because I was clean and sober at the time of my arrest. I asked the judge if I could check into an inpatient rehab facility, and she said yes. I served the rest of my sentence in a program. A month after I got out of jail, I landed a bed in a treatment center. While I completed the program, I started two CMA meetings, both of which I still

attend. I am currently involved in service work in my local area. I also have other service commitments. I have a sponsor who has a sponsor, and I have sponsees. I regularly work the Steps and the Traditions with my sponsor. My whole life has changed.

I see my daughter often now. I love every minute of it, no matter how much we struggle at times. We are working on our relationship, and it gets stronger every day we are together. I saw a dentist who fixed what was left of my teeth, and my smile looks much better now. I have the trust of my family back. I even have bank accounts!

Today, I hope my daughter will not have to grow up in the same way I did. I try to do everything in my power to make that happen. I look forward to owning my own home and keeping a job for over two years. If I can touch the heart of just one addict who is still suffering—and help him or her find a solution in CMA the way I did—then all my own suffering has been completely worth it.