

I WAS A LUCKY GIRL

I WAS A LUCKY GIRL. I ACTUALLY HAD A NICE CHILDHOOD, a loving family, and a solid academic record, so I don't know why I was so curious about drugs. Maybe it had something to do with the fact that I was lonely and felt "less than" during middle school. I was mousy, awkward, uncool. I had frizzy hair and braces and couldn't dress for the life of me.

By the time I got to high school, I wanted to reinvent myself. When a friend slipped a rave flyer into my hand, I jumped at the opportunity to go. I was 15 years old. At the dance party, I was passed my first pill of ecstasy, and I didn't hesitate from taking it for a second. I was never scared of drugs, only wide-eyed, fascinated, and hungry for acceptance. Soon I was going to raves every weekend and using tons of ecstasy, Ketamine, cocaine, marijuana, and crystal on a regular basis. In college, I graduated from raves to circuit parties but stopped using crystal—I knew I liked it too much. I graduated and established myself in a career that lent itself to heavy drinking and cocaine use. This allowed me to justify my drug habit to myself and others.

About a year ago, I was out in the Hamptons at a couple of events for work. By the end of the day, I drove up to another party at someone's house

on the beach. I had a good time dancing, but by the time we left, I was pretty drunk and had snorted all the cocaine I had brought with me. We went back to my friend's house and decided to go back out partying, but I was tired and wanted more coke. He didn't have any but offered crystal meth.

I told him I didn't do that anymore but still followed him into his bedroom. I had never seen anyone smoke crystal before, and although I was slightly horrified, the addict in me crept out and was intrigued. I absolutely knew I shouldn't go near it but made the decision to try it anyway. The next nine months were a bitter cycle of hedonistic weekends that became hazy weeks and hazy weeks that became high-strung months. I spent weekend nights at my favorite bar or club and weekend days sitting around my apartment with a bunch of guys smoking, chatting, "recovering," and proclaiming our commitment "not do this again next weekend."

I ended up using every day, sometimes in the bathroom at work. I was embarrassed by my behavior. I was one mistake away from losing everything, and I knew it. One Friday, after an especially exhausting binge, I called one of my best friends, whom I hadn't spoken to in about nine months, since he had gotten sober.

I was finally ready to ask for help. He came to talk to me after work. He seemed so clear, wise, and patient. He was so genuine and caring—I didn't feel deserving of it. I brought a bag containing my pipe to the LGBT Community Center in the West Village and ceremoniously threw it into the trash. Then I walked into the Sunday-night Crystal Meth Anonymous meeting and was greeted by smiling, warm, friendly faces. I knew I was safe and in the right place. It's funny—I came to the program to get sober, but I stay to get spiritual. I am being introduced to an entirely new world of knowledge, spirituality, self-realization, and well-being. I respect every single person in the program and their belief systems. I am filled with gratitude for their presence and for their investment in my sobriety. I am so grateful for this program, for my sobriety, and for the ability to say, "My name is Jamie, and I'm an addict." —*Jamie K.*