

525,600 SOBER MINUTES LATER

I WOKE UP DRENCHED WITH MY OWN SWEAT, SHIVERING and disoriented. The drug dealer was passed out on the floor, and I was in his bed. Judging from the glob of stuff caught in my throat, the eight lost hours, and the troubled look in the resident dog's eyes, I must have overdosed. The solution came quickly: more drugs, more denial, more insanity. Dressed for a late-spring day (instead of for the blizzard outside), I left the dealer's house and wandered the streets in foot-deep snow, seeking yet another stranger's den to scurry into in an attempt to avoid the impending crash and despair.

This was one of the last times I "went out." That I now have a little more than a year of continuous sobriety is a testament to many things: meetings, the support of the Crystal Meth Anonymous fellowship, my sponsor's guidance, Step work, therapy, recovery books and other program literature, meditation, and daily practice at being honest, open-minded, and willing. Though I can easily list the actions I've taken to stay clean, I still don't know exactly why it is that I'm sober today—why I had that moment when I realized that I was the one causing all of the harm and that I didn't have to keep living my life as a victim.

Was it luck, fate, grace? It could have been any of those, I suppose, but I no longer need to convince myself that I understand everything. Instead, I'm learning to focus on the deep sense of gratitude I feel toward my sobriety. Learning to not get so caught up in semantics and old notions has helped my recovery. I am grateful for Step Two regarding this, because it challenged me to let down my defenses and let go of baggage associated with words like *God* and *faith*. In doing so, I've begun releasing myself from the intense shame that prevented me from fostering an understanding of my Higher Power, which reveals itself more every day.

There aren't any hard and fast answers to this stuff for me. I only know what works and what doesn't. Being willful and wallowing in self-pity doesn't work. What does work for me is to trust that no matter what happens, I will be taken care of—as long as I don't pick up. At just more than a year sober, I am hardly cured. I can't even say that I've "gotten it." On the contrary, I know that my serenity and sanity depend on remaining

humble and honest, as well as continuing to work on my program of daily action. I have issues and hardships like everyone else, but I don't have to get high because of them. —*Mike R.*

GLAMOUR WEEKENDS: THEN AND NOW

BEFORE MY TRIP INTO SOBRIETY, MY LIFE WAS SO glamorous. I spent weekdays recovering from each weekend past and preparing for each weekend future. Calling connections to make sure I had the right party favors. Planning with "friends" to spend quality time in dark, loud clubs. Looking for sexual escapades. Weekends—indicating the time period during which it was acceptable to use drugs—started on Fridays with a low-key sex party that lasted until "Saturday downtime," or pre-club time. This was when I'd let myself come down a bit and get more favors ready for the evening.

Saturday-night clubbing made me feel like I was finally somebody. I got to dance with the half-naked in-crowd at the hot clubs and circuit parties. I felt such a sense of unity after pushing my way to the center of a dance floor packed with sweaty, grinding bodies moving together and sharing so much love. In addition to sharing their love, they shared their bumpers and spoons and vials and other utensils in that search for unity. How quickly the bodies moved away from someone dropping to the floor or being carried away because of a drug overdose! When I think about clubbing now, I also remember the intense looks on every face in that inner circle. If dance is about rejoicing, why was no one smiling? Why were all the jaws set firmly? Why were people wearing sunglasses inside at night on a dance floor? Where did Sunday go? And why was I crying on Tuesdays that my life was so empty, before doing a bump and picking up the phone to start planning the next weekend? Why do I, or the addict in me, miss this at times?

My weekends now start on Fridays again, after a productive, relatively stress-free work week. Friday night I go to a recovery meeting and then to fellowship with the group. We usually go out to eat, then sit and talk.

ONE OF THESE BOYS WAS NOT LIKE THE OTHERS

Generally I get to bed around midnight on Fridays now—after a long week it's nice to go to bed thinking about my day off on Saturday. Who knew there were so many activities to do during the day!

Sunday morning I get up early, as opposed to having stayed up since Friday. I start my day with a recovery meeting and then head off to work. Working Sundays in Chelsea is quite an experience—I get to smile and flirt with people all day. I also get to see guys running home with their sunglasses on before the sun gets them. Sundays after work, I get together with friends from my fellowship or simply go home to try to pursue a new hobby, cook, or just watch TV.

Wow! It seems like I get through my weekends now without drugs, developing meaningful relationships with others and with myself, doing and seeing things without sunglasses, and finally rejoicing in my life. I guess my life is still pretty glamorous. —*Christopher G.*