



Life is not a life
with drugs

This is a true story of my life as a drug addict
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South Africa is a great country with a lot of problems. One of the problems is substance abuse and it is getting worse as dealers are targeting soft targets, especially schools. I feel people are not doing enough in our schools or as parents to educate our children of the dangers of drugs and alcohol. We live in a conservative society where people do not want to talk openly about drugs. To put this problem aside is wrong and parents must themselves take charge by educating themselves about drugs so that they in turn can educate their children. Just like we teach our children about sex because of HIV we should also tell them about the dangers of drug abuse.

It is still believed that if you teach your child at an early age, about the danger of drug abuse it will make a difference. Parents sometimes tell children not to do something because it is bad without explaining why. Rather talk openly to them about the dangers and living a drug free life. We can no longer say "this cannot happen to my child" or "it is the schools duty or the SAP". It is in our best interest as parents to do something by being open about the abuse drugs.

Nobody is an expert on parenthood therefore I want to share my life as a drug addict with you and hopefully parents and children will benefit from reading my confession. I am not proud of what I did with my life or all the people I hurt in the process. It would make me happy if a child can refrain from ever start using drugs or alcohol or quit by sharing what I have experienced down this road.

Being the eldest of four boys with good parents who worked hard to give us all we needed. We are a very close family with a lot of love for each other. In 1974 we moved from Cape Town to Johannesburg, which meant a new school and new friends. At the age of thirteen in a new school wanting to be one of the boys, sport played a big roll as a scholar. I always wanted to be "one of the boys" so I joined a very powerful gang who hard earned the worst reputation because of the bad things they did. We were out with the gang one day drinking alcohol and partying when an older guy we knew offered me a "joint". I did not say no, because as a teenager knew nothing about marijuana except that it was illegal. It gave me a weird feeling so I did not hesitate using it again. Little did I know that this was the start of a long and slow road towards drug addiction by smoking and drinking alcohol before, during and after school. My schoolwork and sport started deteriorating but as a teenager I always had an excuse for my behaviour. For two years until the age of fifteen, drinking, smoking joints and hanging out with gangsters hurting people, fighting and stealing their money for

dope, alcohol and girls was my lifestyle. At the age of sixteen I as a result of a rugby accident became an epileptic. I than started experimenting with other drugs such as LSD, which was a different "high". Because of my epilepsy coping with school was difficult so I quit school and started feeling sorry for myself. That was a big mistake which just made me do more drugs because it made me feel better about myself even though knowing you are not allowed to do this because it is against the law and being epileptic doctors warned me not to drink alcohol or do drugs.

My family moved again from Johannesburg to Pretoria where I started to attend classes at College to complete matric. Starting again by meeting up with different people and made new acquaintances at College. Then it was fun hanging in a bar the whole day instead of being in college. It was in this period that smoking Mandrax was the in thing and then I was called to do army training. Smoking Mandrax was a bad experience as this had worsened my health and my life started deteriorating in front of me but I did not care. Life had just changed towards being a full on drug addict and my life existed only of getting "stoned". On coming out of the army I had to do the jobs on offer but the salary earned was not enough for my lifestyle of addiction which meant starting illegal activities like selling stolen goods, stealing, and basically anything to get money, and al for a "high". While being on medication for epilepsy my immune system seemed as though it could tolerate more drugs than compared to a normal addict. Between the age of nineteen and twenty six I was always in trouble for fighting in and outside of clubs, the law also played their roll and I was caught four times for possession of marijuana and was also suspected of other activities but there was no proof. In this period my addiction to LSD and Mandrax had got worse and was costing between three to six hundred rand every day. For me this was a game and I did not realise or did not care about the pain that it was causing to my family.

Life was just one big party of drug cocktails like a roller-coaster up en then down and speeding along and haven't I also seen people have a bad experience on LSD. They see things that are not even there which gave me a fright and having people you know overdose in front of your eyes. It is not a nice site at all to see a person die or come close in front of your eyes because of to much drugs.

We went out to friends in Johannesburg where we just sat as normal smoking mandrax. We had a plan for a housebreak, we new was foolproof. The time was right 1:30 am My friend saw we were to out of it to go along so 2 guys went and 2 stayed. At 6:30 am the phone rang and we were told that both men were shot dead with multiple bullet wounds as a result of trying to escape from a robbery. We never got to thank our friend who told us that we should wait for him to get back. It was like my life flashed right passed me in knowing that it could have been one of the two of us. I did not enjoy needles or pills but did pop a few pills now and then as two friends of mine overdosed in front of me injecting Walconol, they died so quickly that there was nothing we could do, which shock me and I got a fear of needles. Coming close to overdosing is not a good experience. One day a guy we knew came up to me and gave me a handful of pills which I immediately put in my mouth an started swallowing while he was trying to tell me two was enough, but it was to late. He told me this was the most Vesparex he had ever seen someone take. This happened on a Friday night and for four days after that I had to be fed, taken to bathroom and could not walk or talk.

Fully recovered one week later and decided not to pop pills again as that week was a blur but done some weird thing which put me off taking pills again.

There has been too much misery and death around me because of drugs although never forgetting a close school friend of mine that dies when we were only sixteen in a fatal stabbing outside a night-club in a fight over a girl.

Taking drugs is no life at all and by the age of twenty five I had already been engaged to be married twice which never worked out at all because of my substance abuse. My life was a mess but like any addict I believed that the problem could be fixed by myself by not admitting that there was a problem. That was another big mistake by keeping my problem a secret and then decided to stop smoking mandrax and dope. Only then I started sniffing cocaine mainly because it is a smaller parcel, compared to carrying mandrax and marijuana. Life became very unmanageable as cocaine is a very expensive habit and highly addictive. The feeling is so good that you don't worry about your actions and don't care about the consequences of what you do, life becomes a nightmare. Money starts to have no meaning in life and life has no meaning of life anymore. This turns out to be a life that surrounds being in dangerous places with dealers, money and other addicts. I made good money and was able to get cocaine on the book from dealers because they trusted me which meant using more was easy for me.

On the age of thirty I got married and was divorced 3 years later, even though my ex wife tried to help me but listening to people was not my strongpoint. The worst was still to come, when at the age of twenty eight crack cocaine came in my life which is just as addictive as heroin. Crack was the worst drug of my experience as it really takes away everything you have got, love, friends, family, money and most importantly your life. From the age of twenty eight till the age of thirty six crack was my life. Spending all my money on the next "fix" and always having my parents pay my drug debts which was by no means cheap at all. To give you an example of the things a person is capable of while on crack, the company I worked for closed down and being a long time employer of the company I received a seventy five thousand rand cheque which I spent within two and a half weeks and for those two and a half weeks I never even slept, it was like that crack fix would never end.

Crack grabs you in a place you do not want to be grabbed and does not want to let go at all and you become somebody you don't want to be. When you see a millionaire or two lose everything because of crack it is also not nice to see because you could also have had all this money but chose crack which could cost up to three thousand rand a day as was in my case. A crack addict becomes withdrawn from society and does not care for other people or life and a person should remember that drugs is a habit to treated in the right manner and there would be a better chance of treating someone as early as possible at a young age before the addiction gets worse. The best cure is if the individual realises and admits to having a problem and really wants to give up any substance abuse which is not that difficult because it is all in the mind. Crack was the most devastating drug ever experienced by myself as it becomes your god and you actually worship it but it is a living hell and you don't care about anything around you, only

when the next "fix" is going to come from.

After being in a rehabilitation centre for three months a lot was learnt by me and a lot started to make sense but it is difficult to start a new life at the age of thirty six after twenty three years on some kind of a drug. Seeing things that was always there all your life is a new experience and weird but it is a challenge and a challenge is a fight for me and fighting is in my blood. Things have started looking much better now that the hard drugs are something of the past but I always must remember that I will be a drug addict for the rest of my life. It will take me many years to get back what was lost especially gaining peoples trust in me and showing my love for my family and the few friends that have helped me with my recovery and prove to myself that it is possible to live a normal life with its ups and downs and have done well thanks to the people that always showed me love. People are not aware of the dangers of hard drugs which is why this true story was written by me, not to tell you about the bad things I did but to make you realise that substance abuse could happen to anybody. We as people should make an issue of this and demand more anti drug campaigns for example anti drug banners, anti drug radio and television commercials and more talk shows on this habit. I cannot say this is the answer but only a suggestion. Substance abuse plays a big part in crime so it is up to us to be more open about the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse and to come together as one and stamp out this problem that effects our children's and country's future.

My message to you is that you should not abuse any substance as this could just be the start of a long lonely road to addiction and worst kind of life you can imagine. You cannot imagine how difficult it has been for me to get my story on paper as my addiction is unlike anything you can imagine, almost like a horror story, just worse.

SAY NO TO DRUGS IT IS NOT A LIFE!