



MARK DREWETT PERSONAL STORY: IN FULL

Mark Drewett has recently become a WIRED volunteer and is currently serving a sentence in HMP Bullingdon. He has recently become a Christian and completed the RAPt (Rehabilitation of Addicted Prisoners Trust), 12-step drug rehabilitation programme. This is the first part of his life story, in which he describes his childhood and introduction to alcohol and drugs.

My name is Mark and I am an addict.

In the past, this is something I've refused to accept and later became ashamed to admit.

Although I'm not exactly proud of it, today I understand it's what I am. For me, there is no longer any stigma attached. I feel blessed to be able to share my experience, hopes and strengths. Not only does it keep me clean, but, God willing, it may save another lost soul.

I stare at this page, for what seems like hours, my breathing is heavy and my mind races, as the addict within me tries to have me manipulate my story as not to make me sound bad or seem foolish. In order to help myself and others, I must tell it how it is, from the beginning.

I was born in 1973 in the city of Oxford, to a seventeen year old single Mum who at such a young age had already acquired a taste for alcohol. Despite this and the fact that my Father was absent, I had a relatively stable childhood during my first five years. Even though I spent a lot of time with my Aunties and Grandparents, from what I can remember, I was like any other child.

My Mum began to have various relationships and when I was seven; she married my Step-dad. It was then that my life seemed to change. He was a brute of a man and subjected both myself and my Mother to years of mental and, at times, physical abuse.

I recall times of hiding under my bed trying to block out the arguments from downstairs and it was then that I began to feel helpless and somewhat worthless. The person I loved most in the world was being abused and I couldn't do anything about it.

Things got so bad, at the age of eleven that I had to go and live in Wales with my Auntie. I began to believe that it was in some way my fault that my Mum no longer wanted me around.

Unwanted, unloved, worthless, and full of self-loathing and resentment. I began to isolate myself and build barriers, whilst doing all I could to gain attention and cause havoc, after all... I was the problem.

A year passed and I returned home. Things had gone from bad to worse. My Mother was a prisoner in her own home, with a bottle for company, just trying to do the best she could for her children – and being punished for it.

For the next couple of years life for me was a lonely experience. I hated being in the house and did all I could to avoid it, which only caused myself and my Mother more grief.

One night when I was fifteen I came home ten minutes late. I walked through the door, Andy punched me. Luckily, I deflected the blow with my arm. It broke. I left home.

I had already experienced alcohol six months previously. I 'came to' with my head under the cold tap, a pile of sick on the kitchen floor and my Mum clutching my hair, giving me a lecture, which at the time I thought was pretty rich coming from an alcoholic.

I stayed at my Nan's for some time and began to drink more and more. I would steal money and drink from my Nan or the shops. My family, whom I'd once loved and respected, became obstacles in my way, to living how I wanted.

I left home and began moving from bed-sit to bed-sit, each time having to leave due to unpaid rent. I didn't care. The world owed me. I was seventeen, drinking in nightclubs, on street corners, at college, wherever I could, however much I could. Some times were good. Some times were bad. Some I don't remember. I woke up in police stations, bus stops and hedges. I got involved in football violence. I felt wanted, I felt needed and I felt that I belonged.

As my pride and ego grew, so did my desire to escape. The alcohol stopped working on its own. It worked well with ecstasy, speed, cannabis and LSD. Football ceased and my love for raves and drugs began in 1990 – 1991.

The popularity I craved came from selling drugs, just as it had from the football violence. I felt as though I belonged, I felt wanted and needed. I always had money in my pocket, giving me a false sense of pride; and drugs in my system, giving me the salvation I had to have.

I didn't see too much of my family, only when I needed something. In rare moments of sobriety, memories would come flooding back and I'd see what I was. I felt lonely, worthless, helpless and sad, like that little boy sat under his bed listening to his Mum being abused. I was angry, angry at my Dad, my Mum, my Step-Dad, the whole world. I didn't belong! Only when I was high or drunk did I feel at ease with myself and others. I especially enjoyed the raves. I enjoyed every minute of it, especially those I can't remember.

The rave scene died down, as did my drinking and drug taking, although I continued to smoke cannabis daily.

I was nineteen, living in a bed-sit and in and out of various jobs. Some of them I enjoyed, but my inability to take responsibility, my lack of self belief, and the fact I hated being told what to do always managed to get in the way of me holding down a job for any period of time.

(To be continued)

This is the second part of his life story, in which he describes the development of his substance use and subsequent addiction.

When I was 19 years old, crack cocaine came onto the scene and yet again, I had to be the centre of attention. Everybody around me wanted it and only few could provide – and I had the connections from my earlier dealing days. Selling crack helped to fill the void I felt within; it gave me a sense of power and superiority, and I felt needed by others. I felt wanted and milked it for all it was worth. I, myself, smoked it daily and also gave it away to my friends, again trying to perceive that I was a generous and good person.

My life revolved around the selling and more importantly, the smoking of crack. I can't count the times I had panic attacks or black outs. My paranoia grew to the extent that I believed my best friends and family were either plotting to rip me off or working for the police. Still, I continued to smoke.

I got involved with a girl. She knew nothing about my using or dealing. I hid it well. When we were together, I was the person I'd always dreamt of being: kind, considerate, loving, 'together' and responsible. I promised her everything I could only dream of, and delivered nothing but heartache.

My charade came to an end when my dark side was exposed in 1995. I was arrested at my girlfriend's parent's house for supplying Class A drugs. I don't think I was capable of feeling much at all other than shame and relief that maybe it was all over.

I spent nine months in jail and hated every minute of it. It seemed like I was in there for nine years. My girlfriend took five months before she could come and speak to me, but after a lot of convincing on my part, we got back together. I also convinced myself that things would be different, that I'd make something of my life.

On release in 1996, I moved in with my girlfriend and her parents. They treated me like a son, offering me all the support and love I'd always craved, yet I didn't know how to accept it. I feared that it would be taken away in an instant. I felt that I didn't deserve it. I couldn't understand how anyone could love someone like me and on occasions, I began to use crack. For me, it was easier to pretend that I didn't care than it was to recognise how I felt and admit that I didn't know how to cope.

I began to loathe myself more. I had the beginnings of something good and I knew not what to do with it. I came to the conclusion that if my girlfriend and I had a child then surely I wouldn't use drugs, surely everything would be OK?

On the 15th May 1997 my little girl was born. It was the most amazing thing I've ever seen. I was working as a foreman for a window cleaning company, which I enjoyed. I was six months clean from drugs, playing football and drinking at weekends. For the first time in my life I was taking responsibility and heading in the direction in which I'd always wanted to go.

I can remember holding my little girl in my arms at the hospital and promising her that she's never have to go through the pain of not having her father around to look after her. Here was someone I could love and nurture. Someone I would be there for unconditionally and take responsibility for. The thoughts scared the life out of me. Couldn't even do it for myself. I left the hospital and got very drunk.

For the first few months after my little girl was born I held it together, doing what I believed any father should. But I wasn't any father. I was living with an addiction that thrived on fear, convincing me that I was worthless and always projected the worst. It lived in my head every minute of the day and my false pride wouldn't let me ask for help so I began to spend more time in the pub.

Some days I'd leave work at 11 a.m., go to the pub and then come home drunk at midnight. Other times I'd go to a crack-house and not go home at all. It was always someone else's fault, never my own. I'd spend all my money on drink and drugs, not for one minute considering my responsibilities. Eventually, my girlfriend and I split up, just before my little girl's Christening.

I was asked not to attend the Christening as it would result in a confrontation with my girlfriend's family. No way was I going to accept being told not to go. So I made my way to the church. When I arrived, for the first time since my using began, I decided to put someone else first. I just couldn't ruin the day so I sat on a wall out of sight and I watched my little girl go into the church with her mum and both of our families. For the first time, I admitted to myself that I was in trouble. I wept, I cursed myself, the world, and God, and then I wept some more.

Somebody had seen me and my girlfriend brought our baby out to where I sat and took photos of me with her. I was totally ashamed of who and what I was. I sobbed my heart out and then I drank beer.

I struggled to maintain contact with my family and sobriety for a year. I went in and out of their lives until I totally destroyed any hopes of rekindling the relationship.

In 1998, I began to use heroin along with crack and I became dependent on them both. I got involved with drugs' gangs, always being the one to line their pockets, putting myself on the line to feed my own drug habit. Sometimes, I'd make £500 in a day. I'd smoke it all. Sometimes, I'd smoke that much money away anyway and

I'd end up in debt. I didn't care one way or the other, I wanted to die. I was beaten, stabbed and shot at.

Still I continued to use drugs. I lied, I stole, I cheated, and I manipulated everyone and everything to get my needs met. I used, abused and pushed away everyone that tried to love me – and those that I loved.

In 2000, I was arrested again, for supplying Class A drugs and sent to prison for five years. I used for the first year of my sentence but I knew that in order to get parole I needed to address my drug use. I did the relevant courses and began to open up a little but only on my terms: manipulating, controlling and denying my true feelings to tick all the boxes. I manipulated my way through the system, doing what was necessary and telling people what they wanted to hear. After two and a half years, I was given my parole.

In my arrogance, I thought I had conquered my drug use and I looked down at those who used. However, within five weeks I was smoking crack again. I got 'breached' (recalled to prison) over the phone and so I went on the run for three months, consuming as many drugs as I could, hoping that I would not wake up.

Eventually, they caught up with me and I returned to prison full of self-pity and hating the world. For 14 months, I dreamt of getting my own back and financially regaining all that I had lost to the world of drugs over the years.

Christmas Eve 2004, I was released. I stayed drunk until January 2nd. For one week, I was so overwhelmed with guilt and shame. I knew every thought in my head and knew that my false pride wouldn't allow me to share them.

I tried to find work but my five year sentence hindered me. This, of course, was followed by more self-pity and resentment. On the 2nd February, I started to take crack and heroin again. I also started to sell it again, to support my habit and make me feel better, telling myself that I was better because at least I wasn't stealing. That's how twisted my thinking was. On the 16th Feb, I was arrested yet again. I received eight years in prison for supplying crack.

For those looking in, I would have appeared as though I took it on the chin. Inside, however, I was broken up. I used on occasions during the first few months of my sentence but soon settled in to playing the system and using my sharp tongue to get a good job. In July, my then girlfriend was raped. I was devastated. I partly blamed myself. I was full of rage and as much as I felt for her, it wasn't long before, as usual, my feelings turned to 'poor me'. Our relationship broke down and I rekindled an old one – with heroin.

For three and a half months, I used every day. One night I began to cry into a bit of foil as I smoked heroin. I hit my knees and I asked God to help me. I didn't promise him anything. I just said, from the bottom of my heart that I'd had as much as I could take and, 'Please God, help me.'

(To be continued)

Mark Drewett is a WIRED volunteer, currently serving a sentence in HMP Bullingdon. This is the third part of his life story, in which he describes his experiences of treatment, recovery, and his new-found enjoyment of a life spent free of alcohol and drugs and committed to God.

It was really scary, it was emotional, it was real and it was worthwhile.

It was two o'clock in the morning when I prayed. I was in a drug-induced coma for what seemed like minutes but must have been hours.

My cell door opened at 8am and I was told to for an MDT (mandatory drug test). Knowing that I would test positive and be in trouble, I instinctively told the officer to 'do one' and shut my door.

I was placed on report and stood before the Governor the next day. He asked me why I refused to give the test. For the first time in a long while, I told the truth. He cautioned me and sent me away. Four days later I was subjected to a MDT, for which I tested positive for heroin.

I stood before the Governor again, who was taken aback as it was apparent that I'd used again since the last time we had met. He asked me if I was taking the 'Mick'. I replied, 'No' – 'I'm taking heroin'. And then I basically explained that I had been taking heroin constantly for the last three months, and the best part of eight years. No amount of adjudications and loss of privileges are going to change the fact that I will continue to take heroin, not because I want to but because I don't know how to stop. He asked me if I wanted to stop. The thought terrified me, but I nodded, 'Yes Sir, I do!'

That same day, 25th November 2005, I was moved to the drug free unit and was due to start the RAPT treatment programme on the 28th. I went through withdrawals. It was uncomfortable and my emotions ran high, but I'd suffered worse and wasn't about to let everyone else on the wing see me suffer so I put on a brave face.

My first two weeks in treatment were pretty straight forward and were spent, mainly getting to know my peers and answering cognitive behavioural questions. My first assignment at the end of the two weeks was to write an outline of my life story, to enable others to get to know where I've been and where I want to be.

Full of self-pity and resentment I put my all into it. Reading it out to the others was daunting. I was full of fear... how would I be perceived? Will people like me? Will they hate me? Is my story as good as their's? A million questions raced through my mind and I answered them all as negatively as I could. I didn't want to read it. I was terrified. Only one thing scared me more – the thought of using heroin. The way I saw it, I had two choices. I read it.

I was overwhelmed by the response. Nobody judged and many related, if not to the situations I had been in, then to the feelings of insecurities, fear, loneliness, helplessness, guilt, shame and sorrow. For the first time in what seemed like a lifetime, I no longer felt alone or different and I had a glimmer of hope. I'd been accepted for what I just being me. I began to feel vulnerable and I could feel the tears well up in my eyes. Like so many times before in my life, I was able to shut them off – down came the shutters. My loneliness resurfaced and I was comfortable.

However, my journey in recovery had begun. I was introduced to the 12 steps of Narcotics Anonymous, based on the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. For the next four months I was taken through the first three steps in a group environment.

Step 1: We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step 2: We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step 3: We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood him.

For each step I was given assignments, consisting of up to seven questions such as: loss of control, destructive behaviour, broken promises to family and friends, effects of my addiction on family and friends, loss of relationships and many more. For each question I had to write five examples, giving a full account of when it was, where it was, who it involved, how I felt at the time, how I feel now. I had to list my defects of character, the self-pity, isolation, worthlessness, dishonesty, fear of responsibility, manipulation, anger, false pity, self righteousness, and so on.

There are three requirements for the programme: Honesty, Open-mindedness and Willingness.

Although at first I was full of fear, I put 'my all' into every piece of Step-work. I can't count how many times I threw paper across the cell, wanting to give up as I recalled what I'd put my family, friends and others through and felt the pain.

As time went on I began to grow and I discarded the shutters. I let myself be vulnerable and cried when I felt the need, even for others in my group. It no longer had me feeling embarrassed, only human. It was good to feel human. I began to appreciate what I had instead of feeling sorry for what I didn't. It was good to be around people and a release to be able to trust them, and have them trust me. I didn't need to pretend to be who I am not, I didn't need to lie or manipulate. Just be myself.

I got through without many struggles. It was really scary, it was emotional, it was real and it was worthwhile.

The next two steps were done with a counsellor, one on one.

Step 4: We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Step 5: We admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

All of my fears, resentments, assets and harms done to others were written out in black and white, the parts I'd played, what I'd done, how I justified it, and a way forward. I sat for ten days with a counsellor and read about my life. I cried, I laughed, I prayed and I was humbled.

I'd gone as far through the steps as the RAPT course goes but I now had a 12-step programme to follow daily for the rest of my life.

Step 6: We were entirely ready to have God remove all defects of character.

Step 7: We humbly asked him to remove all our shortcomings.

Step 8: We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Step 9: We made direct amends to them all, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Step 10: We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong properly admitted it.

Step 11: We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand him, praying only for the knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts and practice these principles in all our affairs.

It's now the 17th December 2006. The last time I used was on the 25th November 2005. I've not been a year clean from alcohol or drugs since the age of 15. Last week was my 33rd birthday.

The past 18 years have been a struggle in one way or another. Only in the past year have I gained acceptance of what I am (an addict). Drink and drugs are only a symptom of the disease from which I suffer. The 12 steps and wonderful people in the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous are my medicine and if I take them every day, then I'll be OK.

Life isn't a bed of roses. There are many things that I don't agree with but I've learnt to accept life on its own terms. Life doesn't revolve around me and I can't

always get my own way. I can't control everything. I can't change the past and I can't control the future.

I've done a lot of things that I'm not proud of. I've hurt a lot of people in the process and although I wish that some things had not happened, I wouldn't change them as they are things that have helped me arrive at where I am today.

My experiences, shared, may just save the life of another addict who hopelessly wanders God's earth not being able to see a way out, as I once did.

As far as I can remember, I've always been aware of God's presence; as a little boy, praying for the screams to stop, all the way through to times of trouble, praying for a light sentence whilst in court. Only, I was too blind to see how he worked and too full of ego to believe he knew better than me.

I look back at my life and think about some of the events I've been through, the amount of drugs and alcohol I've consumed, the times I wanted to die and yet lived. I have no doubt in my mind that it was God's will not to take me.

I look back at the time the officer busted my cell after I prayed to God and I realise that he works in mysterious ways. Many things I used to call coincidence I now see as the truth. I find it difficult to forgive myself for a couple of things that I have done, yet to know that God forgives me, gives me great comfort. Who am I not to forgive, when my Father forgives me?

I've spent most of my life feeling inferior to most people, creating false images and going to any lengths to show that I'm superior in the crazy world I lived in. Today, I feel I am the same as everyone else, I don't need to find who I am. I believe I'm one of God's children and for me, that's enough. I continue to make mistakes, I get angry, at times I lose my way, but I'm no longer destroying my life, or anyone else's.

Today, I try to live for God and for other people – and it keeps me clean. I don't know what tomorrow will bring but for the first time in my life I've got hope, and for that I am very grateful. I no longer need to drive myself mad trying to figure out where and why I went wrong and turned to drugs. I am an addict, that's the way it is. An hour ago I opened a packet of Jaffa cakes and ate three. Ever since my head has been screaming, 'Jaffa cakes, Jaffa cakes, Jaffa cakes'. It's the same with drink and drugs; if I start I don't know when to stop.

Today, I appreciate the life I have and have begun to love myself. I don't want to die and I know that drink and drugs will kill me. Jaffa cakes won't. Therefore, I will accept my disease and enjoy the rest of the packet.

Thank you for listening. God Bless, Mark.