

DON'T THINK IT'S ALL FOR KICKS! – Carole's Story

Another day and still the same compulsion to drink. When would it end? I didn't know there was help, or if I did I shut off any thoughts of it. My husband was drinking his coffee and weighing me up – “Would she or wouldn't she be all right when I come in from work?”

We were living in a suburb of London, childless then by choice, and both had opposite commutes to work. I left early and ran quickly to catch a bus to take me to the nearest supermarket to get my vodka. This had been my pattern for 1 or 2 weeks now, my secret and I felt enormous guilt. I arrived at the supermarket, paid for my bottle (as my addiction grew I had to steal it as my husband monitored my money) and ran to a little park, took out a glass from my bag, glugged the vodka into it, diluted it with squash and downed it in one, not wanting to taste it. To this day, I can't drink orange squash and it may sound mad, but I hate the taste of alcohol. I sat back, the sun on my face, waiting for the alcohol to kick in. Once it did, to hell with work, I deserved this, didn't I? After the awful childhood I'd had with a mentally ill mother and now my Dad almost at death's door, I needed the relief from anxiety and sadness.

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It started as fun. I was 22, hadn't been drinking long (honestly!) and I was going to a party. Half a bottle of Mateus Rose was just the thing to put me in a devil-may-care mood and I probably had a fantastic time (I can't remember, drink ruins the short term memory and a lot more besides). It was to ruin my life. I could ramble on, but I think I've illustrated the pleasure, pain and mental obsession with alcohol.

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After two marriages (alcohol caused fifty per cent of the break-up of my 1st marriage; it killed my 2nd husband), I now live alone and am rebuilding my life. My elder son contacted me after ten years, last year and I hope my younger son will, eventually. I have self-respect and acknowledge I have worked hard for all this.

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I used to think A.A. was a silly organisation, full of people using the word 'illness' as an excuse. Now I need it. Categorically, it is an illness, recognised by the World Health Organisation, but it is my responsibility not to reactivate the illness; diabetics have to control their illness after all. Quite honestly, once addiction happens, it is a nightmare to oneself and one's nearest and dearest and I would not wish this on anyone, but REMEMBER it can happen to ANYONE, regardless of race, colour or creed – or profession. I did not stand in a queue to be an alcoholic.

Carole
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