

Diary of a heroin addict

In part three of his story, David Wright comes to the harsh realisation that all's not cosy in his drug and alcohol lined existence, and decides he has to seek help.

I did not always go with Scott to Moss Side and this was one of those occasions. Being left behind to wait was a killer, because no matter how you tried, your eyes keep on drifting to the clock. And it's a two-hour journey, so there and back four hours... but then there is that bit in the middle... scoring, having a hit, filling the car with petrol... so all in all you were looking at five hours. I could not stand the wait, and on this particular day I broke the golden rule – I went to the pub for a drink. Never have a hit after you have been drinking, it's gambling with your life. I only planned having the one pint of lager but you know how it is; I was soon chasing an alcohol buzz. I kept an eye on the clock and five hours later I headed back to the commune. I had drunk five pints of strong lager.

To my pleasant surprise, when I got back they were gouched out with the bag of heroin and spoon on the table. I fixed myself a big hit – as they all had their eyes closed I could have a bit extra and get really shitfaced. I was having trouble getting a vein, so I roused Nick and he gave me the hit and I sat down. That's the last thing I remember.

My next memory is being propped up in the hallway by Scott, who was telling me the ambulance was on its way. I felt a warm sensation and I wanted to close my eyes and drift to the warmth. My face was slapped hard and there was a shout – 'don't you go on me again', or words to that effect. After Nick had given me the hit, I had sat down behind him but his sixth sense had told him to turn round. My lips were blue and I had stopped breathing – all hell then broke loose. Scott was barking the orders; he sent Nick to phone the ambulance and then stash the gear. Mike was ordered to fill

bowls of cold water and throw them over me and repeat. Ann took my trainers off and was pinching the bottoms of my feet while Scott walked me round, slapping my face. It took the ambulance 20 minutes to arrive, but by then my friends had brought me round.

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put them in the recovery position and wait for the ambulance. If they had done that I would be dead; I was dead, but they brought me back. I was taken to hospital and given Naltrox, which is supposed to wash the opiates away from the receptors in the brain. But I tell you what, that night was one of the most pleasurable nights I have ever

had on opiates. I spent the night in the TV room, chain smoking with the window open, gouching until the most beautiful nurse would rouse me and ask 'are you OK?', to which I would reply 'wonderful'.

This should have been a wake up call, but I went back to my opiate life. The alcohol was becoming more of a problem though; I used to pull any money I had out of my pocket and count it up in pints of beer – or to be precise, snakebite. Once I got to the magic number of six pints, relief swept through me, as I knew that was just enough to take me to a place where fears of self-analysis disappeared. I could fall back into the role of classroom clown; the one I used to play without the need of a chemical confidence booster, when I was at school.

I was never one of those drinkers that drank first thing in the morning, then ended up going to AA meetings. I

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used alcohol purely as a sedative and a confidence booster. It had got to the stage that even when I stayed in, I had to have four cans of Kestrel Super. So it was at this point in my life that I realised I needed help. I booked an appointment to see a GP.

I sat in the waiting room with a million thoughts going through my head

– the main one: 'what am I going to say to him?' I was called in, and as soon as I mentioned my drug use, out came the pen. He started to make a record of what drugs I was doing, how often, how much I was drinking. He examined me and had a good look at the track marks on my arms. He then looked me straight in the eye and asked, 'do you think you are mad?', to which I replied 'yes'. He booked me to see a shrink at the hospital psychiatric department.

The appointment came, and thank God, he was a lovely guy. We went through each drug, including solvents, one by one, all the usual questions: When? How much? How often? Method of taking the drug? He wrote about eight sides of A4 paper. At the end of the session he prescribed me some Hemill Herverin (which is rarely used now, as they say it's too addictive) and told me not to drink and to see him in a week's time.

I lasted three days. The tablets were weird; when you took two or three of them, after five to ten minutes you would get this warming sensation in your nose. Then you would feel the slight sedation. I say 'slight', because I was used to being very liberal with the amount of drug taken to achieve the desired result. If I needed sedation it would be either half a gram of heroin, or six pints of snakebite, or 10ml of diazepam, plus a couple of mogadon. But as I started to find out, hospitals did not take that into account.

So a week later, I saw him again. I told him I had managed to go three days out of the seven without a drink. Then for some reason, a tidal wave of emotion hit me and I started to cry. Not just a little weep – I was in floods of tears, totally out of control. As the sobs started to subside, I remember saying to him that I was mad, and his reply has stayed with me ever since: 'No, you are not mad, as you have just proved by saying that you are. Real mad or psychotic people think they are sane and blame everyone else for their condition.'

I then asked him if he thought I was paranoid, to which he gave the same answer: people suffering from paranoia think they are OK – but he did say I had paranoid thoughts and ideas. Then he dropped a bombshell, by telling me I needed to be on the ward for a few weeks to detox me and see what was going on with my mind.

Part four in DDN next issue