



# I just wanted to fit in

From his early life as the kid with the funny accent, Alan had seemed destined to depend on drink and drugs as his only way of fitting in. Nobody was more surprised than he was, when Cocaine Anonymous broke his cycle of dependence and prison to offer him a new life.

➤ We moved to Bristol from the North East when they were closing down the mines. I was five or six, with a broad Geordie accent. I felt out of place, different from the people around me.

This constant feeling followed me wherever I was. I followed the crowd thinking 'if I could just feel part of this...'. I spent my time just trying to fit in.

In secondary school I'd found that if I drank alcohol and sniffed substances, I didn't need to fit in so much. I was quite good looking, I could dance a bit. When I left school with no qualifications I drank heavier and heavier. I saw it as a solution – I could fit in.

It got to the point where it didn't seem to be working. So I decided to get married – that'd do it. That wore off, so I thought I'd have a kid. That didn't work, so I had another.

Throughout this process, whoever came near me seemed to come off worse. There was delusion in my head – I wasn't seeing things. Eventually, because of my behaviour, my wife left me, my friends left, and I lost contact with my children.

I had started committing crimes. I would shoplift – then I moved onto burgling houses. I had absolutely no consideration for the victims. All I kept thinking was me, me, me. Then a couple of things happened. My mother died and I didn't make it to her funeral. Then when I went to visit my sons aged seven and eight, I passed out under the kitchen table. I woke up with one of them looking at me in disgust and the other one crying because he thought I'd died.

When 9/11 happened I was in hospital with infection in my groin. They said they might have to take my leg off. But all I cared about was wanting to score. I even thought that if I had one leg I could beg better and get more money.

So I decided that the solution was to move area. I stayed clean for seven hours. Then I ended up on the street, playing a penny whistle. I could play two tunes and justified myself as a busker. Then I got into a fight involving a weapon and ended up in jail. I'd been in prison a couple of times before, but would walk back out into the world with my discharge grant. All I knew how to do was score – so that's what I did.

This time, because of the

conditions of my parole, I had to go on a course. All my family had run from me by now. While I was going through this process in jail, someone put this information about Cocaine Anonymous in front of me. They didn't force it, so I thought I'd have a look.

From this point forward my life changed. I started looking at the Big Book [the 12-step handbook written by Alcoholics Anonymous, and adopted by CA among others]. It's been proven over many years. I did things suggested by CA. I got a sponsor to give me their experience, because that's what I could listen to.

As a result, my life is very different now. Before this programme I couldn't have a relationship with anyone, not even my dog – I had to let her go into a dog's home.

Now I'm back in touch with my kids and I go out and work for an honest living. It's totally alien to the life I had before. All my life I've been selfish and self-centred. I took from everyone for minimum effort. Now I have friends in my life who don't have to run when I come in the door.

I'm a social creature, who can interact at last. The relief and joy is incredible. In all my years of using I could never look anyone in the eye.

I have a nice little home that I pay for – my flat – by going through this simple programme. It's so simple I almost missed it. I wanted to intellectualise it at first; thank God I had a sponsor who told me it would save my life. It's idiot proof – and I can say that, because it worked for me.

I go through my life one day at a time. It's not all sunshine and happiness. But this programme's given me ways to deal with it by doing very simple and straightforward things – as simple as making sure I get out of bed an hour before I leave the house. I used to get up two minutes before leaving, and I wanted to kill people as I went down the road.

I had to be at the point of desperation before I would give it a try. It was hard for me to realise how straightforward the programme is.

I have my friends, my family – and my family in CA. The fellowship wipes all the clutter out of my head. **DDN**

*For help with cocaine or other drugs, call Cocaine Anonymous on 0800 612 0225 or 0207 284 1123, or visit [www.cauk.org.uk](http://www.cauk.org.uk)*