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Season 06. Episode 04

Podcast Title: Interview with Adam - Part 2

This is episode 4 (Part 2 of 2) of season 6.

This continuation of our interview with Adam N. covers how his descent actually accelerated just when he thought it couldn't get any worse, and what it took to for him to surrender and cry out for help before death took him away.

He begins Part Two: " The thing that amazes me looking back is that I did not think I had a big problem for the longest time, not until I was 32 years old, and now I'm 36, sober almost two years after all these years of crazed abuse.

I carried a horrible sense of abandonment by my dad because he was away a lot, as I talked about earlier. So now, fast forward to college years.

At 19 or so, I applied to a second college after I was kicked out of the first one here in the UK. I had intended to enrol in the study of

dentistry, but that went away. I think at that time I was 20 years old and did indeed study and drink and smoke marijuana every day.

I have to say that all this time I was an angry and violent guy. The music scene was UK punk and an angry head-banging scene. Many violent nights, and when I woke up the next morning, I had no memory of whom I had punched or how these ugly bruises on my face and hands got there. Well, I knew how, I just didn't know who put them there.

I never saw my life as all that weird or realized that my incessant and obsessive pre-occupation with drinking, smoking dope and aggressive partying and violence was not normal in the least.

I bounced around for quite a while looking for an answer to my restlessness, anxiety, anger and general discontent. At 27, I went to live with my brother and since we were never close, that did not last, given my violent outbursts and late nights. A year later I went to live with my dad in Dublin where he was working as an auditor, a job that had him away from home more than not. Of course, that lasted just long enough for us to get sick of each other.

Looking back, I don't blame him for doing the kind of work that he did, making a very good living to support four children and a wife in affluent style.

I had become an increasingly angry man. I had no girlfriends, and I didn't know what I was feeling other than a contained rage. Imagine living like that. And yet, I managed to study just enough to get a degree in management from the local college. I had tried to study sports science but as a heavy drinker and smoker, I was not a good fit, to say the least.

After I graduated, I did get a job as a project manager at a steel factory, believe it or not. I held that position for a number of years and got good reviews. It is amazing that I held it together for as long

as I did. My sponsor today tells me that there are such people known as 'high functioning alcoholics'.

So, how did I start the beginning of the end of this story of active addiction and alcoholism?

At 32, I had to have a hip replacement. The cause of the injury might have been all the physical violence I subjected my body to. I then got addicted to powerful opioid painkillers...codeine, Vicodin, benzos, plus I was drinking, of course I was drinking.

And I ended up in jail for assault. As I said, I had become an exceptionally angry and violent man.

That was the Moment when I started to wake up. Not fully awake quite yet. After I got out of jail a few weeks later, I went home and attacked my dad. I got drunk and started cutting myself.

Moment of truth: I looked at myself in the mirror, and said I need help, or I will end up in a grave right here in England. I called my shrink (yes, I was seeing a psychiatrist whom I was not heeding to stop drinking and using) who firmly suggested I travel to a rehab right here in Thailand. A week later I showed up all strung out, and yes, I got drunk on the plane on the way over. I'm told that sort of thing happens more often than not. One last snort before I put it all down, hopefully for good.

So, two years after treatment in a primary rehab for two months and three months in a sober living facility, I am 100% involved in AA and helping others along the way, especially those young guys who are just getting started on this journey of a lifetime.

Today, I am free of the shackles of my addiction. I did as I was asked for the first time in my entire life. I attended 90 AA and NA (Narcotics Anonymous) meetings in 90 days. There I learned from other men and women how to work the 12 steps that start with the surrender of my old ways of thinking.

I adopted the concept of WE...that there is power in togetherness. I can live without having to drink...that is probably one of the biggest realizations I have experienced. Imagine not having to drink or use any mind-altering substances.

Then to go on and to acquire a higher power and to make amends to my family and to let go of my anger and resentments toward my dad. He did the best he could. It was my extreme self-centeredness that caused me to blame him for my neediness.

You asked me what my three pillars are for staying clean and sober. Several 12-step meetings a week. Daily prayer and meditation. Working with a sponsor to understand and put the steps into my life every day. Oh, the fourth which you didn't ask for: live one day at a time because it's always today!"

This ends Part Two of Adam's story.

Postscript: Adam's story of redemption is most inspiring to us, as it traces the ride into a hell that is defined by the power of addictive disease and what it took to overcome it.

It is also instructive in the way he identifies two aspects of his journey down and then up: he knew he resented his dad, having felt abandoned by him, thereby carrying uncontained rage erupting in violence.

He also did not really know what he was indeed feeling at all. He got there after he started treatment which is designed to get addicts to identify and accept their feelings, having eliminated the substances that they used to keep them bottled up inside.