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Busting Addiction and Its Myths Episode 6 Season 3

An Interview with Andrew - This is not a game

In this post, I interview Andrew, a 30-year-old professional, clean and sober for more than 6 years.

The topics we covered were:

It's rare that an addict or alcoholic becomes addicted to only one substance, "poly-addiction" is the norm.

1. Mother is the great enabler. She tries to help him stop, while at the same time allows him to live rent-free in her second home.
2. Andrew hated the way he felt, and wanted to stop, but didn't know how.
3. He came to realize that he could not quit on his own and needed to reach out and beg for help.

4. Connecting to other young recovering people got him into his first 12 step meeting where he surrendered his old ways of thinking, and he's been clean and sober ever since.

Bruno J: "Andrew you've been sober for over 6 years, so you were very young when you started your recovery. What got you into an AA meeting?"

A: "I hated who I had become. My self-respect was at zero. All I wanted at that point was to just stop using so I could stop hating myself. I did not know anything about recovery. That said, looking back I was not one of the defiant types.

Drugs had humbled me, humiliated me and I knew in my heart that I was ready to learn something new, to do whatever was required to get clean. There's a saying: we were willing to go to any length for victory. So, I was indeed more than willing.

It wasn't that difficult for me to fit into recovery, because there was a young person's AA meeting that by coincidence took place just a few blocks from my house. On any given Sunday night, there must be a hundred people there, most of them 35 or under, so I felt right at home when I first walked in desperate for help of any kind. In fact, what I learned there was that the newcomer is the most important person in the room. I didn't just feel comfortable, they made me feel comfortable and welcome.

I'm a social person, so it wasn't long before I became part of the fellowship of young guys who happened to be part of the Sunday Night Surrender AA recovery group at that church near me. Even though I started going to meetings there, I was still smoking dope, but it was a start and before long I put the dope down and it has stayed down".

Q: "What made you think it was OK to smoke pot and still be able to claim you were sober?"

A: "I didn't know. I really didn't know until one of my AA friends said being sober meant no mind-altering substances at all. Besides, we both knew that smoking dope makes you might thirsty and sooner or later you'll reach for that beer.

That's true about hanging around a bar and ordering a non-alcoholic brew. Will Rogers said that the man who coined the term near beer was a poor judge of distance. We in AA say that if you hang around a barbershop, one of these days, you'll get yourself a haircut".

Q: "What role did your mom play in all of this?"

"My mom, who passed away earlier this year, bore the full weight of my using disorder. She tried to get me straight a hundred times, and she tried everything except for throwing me out of that 2nd home she owned. Maybe she should have. She pleaded, yelled, hugged, shouted, resenting me one minute, forgiving me the next. She was the great enabler without realizing that I was just using her so I could just stay high all day long.

Now that she's gone, I am so happy I was there for her at the end, my being fully present so that I could give her the love she deserved.

Bottom line, it wasn't until I myself got sick and tired of being sick and tired, that I made the U-turn.

Today, I don't hang around with my using friends, as if they were friends to begin with, and I don't go to bars unless I have legitimate reason such as a business meeting at a bar-restaurant, and I now have many male and female friends in my fellowship.

I've gone from hating myself to taking care of myself. I've gone from obsession with drugs to liberation from them. I've achieved, if only for a day at a time, victory over drugs and alcohol. I've gone from being an unemployed dropout to working as an aquatics director at the YMCA and getting straight A's in college. I've gone from taking from society to giving back to it.

I am reminded by my sponsor that all I really ever have is the Now, and that I am meant to live in it fully".

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