

## My Advice on Living a Sober Life

In my few years of using drugs, I've noticed kids countless amount of times tell me that sometimes deep down they don't want to do this every single day 24/7. Or they don't want to get high today but everyone else is. Or they don't want to have to get high every time the "squad" hangs out. I started using drugs for the first time when I moved to Portland. I met this small group of people that I loved! Very quickly I started smoking weed with them all day every day. I didn't think it was wrong to smoke weed everyday at 13 because they were my family and we had relationships far beyond weed. As time went on, myself and two others want to experiment with other things. H, G and I all decided to try mushrooms and ecstasy for the first time. B and T were slightly older so they've tried other drugs before and said no way. A was my age but still said hell no that is not my thing. Of course, we didn't care about the warnings they gave us or didn't listen to how hard they tried to talk us out of it. We continued with the plan, met up with G along with his/her older brother and older friends and bought the drugs. After that night, it wasn't just a few kids smoking weed anymore. It was G and I taking mushrooms and acid every day. Along with H disappearing and dropping out of 8<sup>th</sup> grade to go do very hard drugs with these older kids in his/her neighborhood. (his/her mother was very young and used drugs herself so she allowed H to drop out and do drugs. She told the school she will be homeschooling H which never happened.) T was older so he/she took their life somewhere else (I think he/she still smokes pot from time to time). I still talk to B he's/she's one of my best friends but smokes pot daily. A left the group due to a giant fight between another member. G and I were best friends but we recently had a terrible acid trip that damaged our friendship premently.

That little clique that each loved one another very much crashed and burned. The majority still smokes weed but regulates it and is ok for now. We all wanted H to go to rehab but they got offended and ran away from us forever. Last time I talked to them they were addicted to meth and ecstasy and lives two hours from home outside of Portland (not with their mom). G told me he/she wanted to stop using drugs and I said then I will find someone else to spend all my time with, since my life was all about drugs (this was before I moved away). But when I got into cocaine combined with nonstop mushrooms and alcohol, I got no help. Besides it being so obvious I needed help, when I asked for help I didn't get it from G (this was when I moved away to AZ). Since we've been doing acid since 13 I guess it wasn't a "big deal" to him/her. I talk to one of them now and that's B. B is a very smart kid and saw what was happening but couldn't do a thing about it since they were miles away. Going from 6 kids "just smoking weed" resulted in this. That was the short short version. There were countless incidents that resulted in backstabbing, cheating, hurting, lying, stealing ext... all because of drugs.

I moved back to Arizona but nothing changed. I found the people I grew up with and what do ya know they all use! Same exact thing but so much worse. It was a way bigger group of kids that used pretty much anything. The backstabbing, stealing, lying and heartbreak between us was unbearable. But everyone stuck around cause when the drugs and drank came out, it was a-ok. When I decided to get clean and leave that group, looking back on the terrible things we did to each other breaks me. The way we would treat each other was inhumane. Like I said it was a big group of kids, probably 30 or 40. They would sleep with partners that were involved in relationships, break into each other's houses, beat each other to death, steal bags or cars or bikes. I thought that was bad, the stuff I hear now is even worse! How can it get meaner than that! But luckily, I'm not there to share the stories because I don't know the actuality of it. Just what I've heard.

When I was involved with that group people told me probably everyday how bad they want to stop smoking this or stop drinking this or stop shooting this. Even though I used just as bad, I gave correct, soothing and smart advice. The funny this is I never took mine, but neither did anyone else. The day I finally decided to take my own advice was the best thing that ever happened to me. Now that I'm clean, I have kids asking me for help more than ever. A sober friend of mine was driving down the street one day and saw one of our old friends passed out on the side of the road. They were on the verge of unconsciousness but still managed to ask for help and take them to a meeting. She/he picked them up took them to an AA meeting, I gave them an address. The next day they were out on that same corner. I guess they didn't take what the meeting provides, help. It took me a very long time to finally do the right thing. It was just a matter of how bad my pain was. The suffocating terrifying pain produced by constantly using drugs I was done with. The beautiful thing about it was, when I finally decided to ask for help, I listened. Want to hear something even more beautiful, after I listened it worked.

I wish it was that easy for everybody else...any alcoholic, addict, nonalcoholic/addict, whatever. It is hard to stop using when a large chunk of your life is lived with that chemical. It is so difficult to change the way your brain works while trying not to use that drug. It is so painful to have that ongoing battle in your head of wanting that drug but knowing it's not the right choice. It is almost impossible to do it alone but some have proved that wrong. How I did it was just asking and listening. When I want drugs, I ask for help and listen to that help. When I am angry that I can't take acid like "everybody else" I go to an AA meeting and talk about it. If somebody, any shape or size came up to me and said they need help to get sober, these are the steps I would take them through. But, I cannot help somebody if they don't want to take my advice or do as I say. Getting sober normally takes a lot of big changes, listening to someone who's already gone through it (even if you think some of the stuff is stupid) should be a good guidance for now.

I would ask the person many questions about them. Show them I am interested and make them feel safe. When a person trying to get sober not just knows but feels that the other knows exactly how you feel, it is very reliving and comforting. I thought nobody understood how stuck and horrified I was. But everybody, especially ones in AA knew what I was talking about. I would help them look at things from an open and more peaceful perspective. Sometimes people who want to get sober are so tormented and broken they have no hope. It's important to make one realize that is not true and even at this lowest rock bottom of all bottoms we can change. I say we because the person needs help, they can't do it alone they don't know how. I would help this person realize the important things and help them know they can achieve them. Once they aren't so hopeless we will then work on everything we need to change. This part is very hard. It is very hard to change a using life to a non-using life. But once again they are not doing it alone so it won't be as terrifying. When we figure out the things that need changing we will practice living a sober life, leaving the icky stuff behind. Nothing changes like that, it's good to work slowly. Otherwise things get too overwhelming and you might feel like you won't make it leading you to return to use. We will go to AA meetings and we will find a sponsor. We will practice how to be open when something is wrong and we will practice letting emotions out as they come. We will practice being grateful and staying content. We don't need to worry about this or that, we just need to be grateful for the small thing right here right now. We will find a healthy group of sober people that make us feel good and love us. Walking into AA is a great start for that. Lastly, we will practice loving our self and treating our body and mind with love. YOU made this amazing change because YOU were capable. I stop saying we now because even though "we" (one person, sponsors, AA) helped take you

through how to do it but YOU achieved it. Nobody forced you, nobody dragged you. YOU did it. That deserves all the appreciation and love you can give yourself. That is one amazing change that took YOUR effort. Now after all that practicing, YOU can now do these things your way and ask for help from anybody you want. Now that we have learned the tools together YOU can live the life YOU want happily.

In conclusion, I guess I turned this assignment into what I would do if somebody asked for help to be sober. But the number one thing I would tell somebody who wants to be sober is how lovely it is. The place I am at today is something I never thought existed. I never dreamed of a life like this. I never thought I would make one right decision or have a happy household or get good grades or stop harming myself. I have a great life today and it's all because of the change I made once I left all chemicals behind me. I am learning things about myself and the world around me that I had no idea was there because I was so distracted by drugs before. I was going to miss out on so many things if I didn't quit when I did. I can do anything I want today and I can love myself too. I came from hearing the million pieces of my broken heart jingling when I walked. The edge of frying my brain forever even though it felt like that already from the voices I heard and the thoughts I produced. The evilness I brought to my family and friends leaving me in a ball of hatred since I can't do anything right. To feeling tall and clean. I used to feel so small and dirty all the time, the feeling never went away. But now I feel brighter and lighter. My head is clear and my body is grounded. When I open my eyes in the morning and close my eyes at night my brain relaxes. I have my confidence, my goofiness and my voice back. I am finally the me I want to be that I thought was lost for good. You can feel the exact way too I promise. You and I or any other sober person can teach you exactly how to do that, all you must do is ask and listen.

