

Who is driving your bus? Where you are is where you are, and things do not change, things do not change. These are the three things we hear every ASAP meeting, but do we really apply them to our lives? Saying these things has really helped me to understand my living situation. For Quite a while I had designated bus drivers. My parents. I was not in control of where my life was heading. Mom and Dad had plans of their own. As I became a user my hands were swatted away even farther away from the steering wheel. It became my parent's way or the highway. But that was not the only reason why I was not driving my own bus. I really had no desire for a future and was willing to keep my mind in their hands for the time being. One day I came to realize that my lifestyle was becoming a problem and needed to pick my life up. I snatched those bus keys and decided it was time to kick my life into high gear. I had a lot of thinking to do. This is when I realized if things don't change, things don't change. But things needed to change. And for the first time I was completely ready to do so. There were three things I believed needed immediate change; using, bad influences, and my lack of motivation. Of course for the program I quit using. But it became more to me that just staying clean. My thoughts began to clear up and priorities became very apparent. Letting go of my influential friends was one of the hardest things

I had to do. I knew it had to be done though, all for a better life. When I decided to put my life into god's hands it was all that much easier. Loosing friends suck but in the midst of it all my desires will be met. Now I had to figure out where I was exactly. Mentally I was ready to do what needed to be done. Physically I was feeling good from being sober for a while.

Emotionally I felt a little scared wondering whether or not id be able to do it. My attitude was getting more optimistic by the day. I wanted to stay clean just as much as I needed to. Learning the coin helped me to realize the things I needed to change in my life, internally and externally.

Using led me to go places I wouldn't have normally gone being sober, but I needed to escape. When I used I felt free. I felt all my problems were lifted and I felt using with my friends was the answer to everything. When I was feeling down or angry or any emotion really, using helped me cope. Why wouldn't an immediate change in your state of mind help any problem? That was the problem, I was thinking that way. Being in a bad mood always triggered me and made me think this. On the flipside, whenever I felt ecstatic or earned recognition for something, I felt I needed to use. I always wanted to celebrate whenever I could. I wanted to find any reason to get high. But the most important reason why I used was just to have a good

(7)

time. I strongly believe to live life to its fullest, and to do what truly makes you happy. Using made me very happy that's why I needed to stop. Loving something that is only harmful to you and the ones that care for you doesn't seem to smart to me. It took me a long time to realize that, but thank God I did!

Since using was an everyday thing I always had tricks to cover it up. Many times when I used, I looked tired and felt really groggy. I was also very bitchy to non users who had something to say. Like most, my moods would fluctuate often. One thing I regret most is lying to my parents and friends. I was always lying about where I was who I was with, and of course what I was doing. It's very easy to tell when I'm using and when I'm not. When I was using I didn't care to much <sup>what I looked like,</sup> sometimes I would try to look sober and other times it didn't matter to me. But when I would cover up using I would use visine most of all. Many times I would spray perfume to mask the smell; I would also chew gum or grab a soda to drink as I got home. And as I already mentioned I would lie and always keep secrets covering up was a regular thing for me to do. It became natural for me to do these things on my way home.

(2)

When I was using it seemed I never had anything to worry about: except for getting caught. Nothing was relevant to me, and I thought nothing affected me. But being clean makes me realize it's the total opposite. I have many things to worry about but nothing to get me in trouble. It feels great to "sweat the small stuff", instead of wondering whether or not I was going to end up in jail. But I don't just think better now I feel great too. I have no worries and I trust myself to make good decisions. My mind is being used in a completely different way. Another thing I have noticed about myself is I am much more considerate than ever. I'm always thinking of others and what I can do to help them. Being clean has made a significant difference in my life.

In result of me being sober my parents have changed more than I have. A complete 180. It always seemed that I was in trouble; whatever I did it was not the right decision. My parents were yelling at me constantly. Now they know I'm clean and things have changed significantly. I'm never in trouble now. There is no more yelling and their trust for me is 100%. My family is now able to carry on conversations without talking about my use. The family has become friendlier to each other as well. We are now able to get along and hang around each other.

4

Staying clean is worth it to me for many reasons. First of all my life has changed greatly. I finally was able to figure out what I want to do and what I need to do. Second I realized there is no reason to be dependent on anything. I became very strong and independent throughout this Whole experience. Another thing <sup>LEARNED</sup> is that I love the feelings of no worries. Its crazy how when you are not doing anything illegal you're not <sup>PARANOID</sup> parodied about getting into trouble. Last but not least the most important affect of staying clean is the closeness that my family has regained. The feeling I get when I know my parents are proud of me is incredible. And to actually hear them tell me there proud is amazing within itself. Staying clean has been a life changing Experience, one I plan I can carry on for the rest of my life.