

## Using Brings Pain and Loss

Drugs have been part of my life since I started smoking pot at age 16. I used it a lot during the day along with smoking cigarettes. I was quickly addicted to marijuana; when I didn't have it, I was irritable. At 18, I tried LSD for the first time, using it as a weekend thing. Since I wasn't working, I started selling LSD and marijuana, not necessarily to make money but to feed my habit. Later, I tried cocaine and crack. I was eventually arrested for dealing and went to prison for four years. After my release, I started smoking marijuana, snorting cocaine, and smoking crack again. Then I was introduced to prescription pain pills. I continued doing pills for a few years, then tried methamphetamine. That is probably one of the worst drugs out there, so I started using heroin instead.

I started using heroin because I had back problems and was on prescription pain medication. A buddy told me heroin would be better than the pain meds. He was actually right. Heroin does what prescription pills do, just better and cheaper. I can spend \$100 a gram on heroin that lasts me a couple days, or \$10 per day per pill and using 10-30 of them, depending on what kind of prescription drugs they were.

At that time, I was also doing meth. After another arrest, I stopped using meth and started using heroin again—once you stop one substance, you usually go on to another substance. Which drug I chose usually depended on who I was hanging out with.

I decided to try to go to a pain clinic because of my reoccurring back pain, but got kicked out for testing positive for heroin. I went to another pain clinic but failed the drug screens for pot. But I needed something to help with the pain. Muscle relaxers didn't work. Epidurals didn't work. I thought I was going to have to have surgery. Eventually, I realized my back pain was worse when I was on heroin. After being off heroin for six months, it doesn't hurt as bad. The need for heroin was causing a lot of my pain.

Of all the drugs I tried, though, meth is the one you do not want to mess around with because of the way it makes you act. On meth, I was staying up for days and days at a time. It makes you think in a very unclear way. I functioned; I went to work. I could still be productive because it didn't really hold me back. But when I was at work and on meth, people knew something was going on. They would notice when I'd disappear for 15-20 minutes at a time and come back clearly on something, but with my high ranking nobody would say anything.

Plus, manufacturing meth can quickly catch up with you. People get on a watch list pretty quickly because of the supplies needed to make it. So when I made my own, I had others get the stuff for me. Eventually, I got caught. (Even though my mind tricks me into thinking it's safe, I've never had a time in my life that I didn't get locked up when I was using.) At that time, I lost my kids. I lost my home. I lost my job and nearly my girlfriend, too. You lose a lot. For some of us, the loss happens numerous times. It changes you as a person.

As told to Kelly Sickafoose