

Every man's path is walked differently and with this path a story evolves. The great thing is that we are the author of our "own" story. My story in short; I was a child in a man's body; existing but not living; bound and not free. I had believed the lie for so many years that my life was worthless; that I was stupid, and that I would amount to nothing. I was letting other's write my story and became a people pleaser (upon many other things) and in turn I forgot about the most important person—myself. Having this internal battle within me and not knowing how to cope with life stressors in a healthy manner, I turned to drugs and alcohol. I became the author of a story about self-centeredness, it was all about what I could get from those around me and in return I handed over pain, 14 years worth of it. I was lonely, lost and insane. The pain from within in me became unbearable, I contemplated suicide thousands of times, but by Gods grace I was spared. I made the choice to seek help and found AADAC. This is what brought me into Our House over 4 years ago—broken, lost, scared, angry, and confused.

One of the requirements while I was at Our House was to work the 12 steps either through the NA step guide or through the AA way. I had little to no knowledge of what the steps were, but I was told that if I wanted to build a strong foundation of recovery that this was the way to go. I took the step work seriously and wrote over 400 pages of my life through the 11 months while I was there. Through the steps I was able to find God, clean up the wreckage of my past, and start a new chapter of "my" life.

I remember my first group session and I was asked to introduce myself and give a brief history of what brought me there, I opened my mouth and before I knew it tears were flowing down my face. To my surprise the other men in the group spoke out after and said thank you for sharing and expressed empathy towards me. I knew right there and then I was in the right place because being vulnerable was accepted, admired and praised.

In 11 months I acquired knowledge about self-esteem, budgeting, relapse-prevention, and life skills plus many other important programs that have helped guide me through my recovery to this day. I am now able to cope with life stressors in a healthy manner and no longer have to resort to drugs and alcohol.

While in Our House I was able to build some close, healthy relationships with other men. I have been able to watch my friends in recovery get married, have children, and rebuild relationships with family and friends. On the other hand, I have watched loved ones pass away, some fellow addicts and others being family. Through those tough times I have been able to stay clean and sober and the gift is that I was able to be of service to those that I love.

Our House provided me with the tools to live life and go after my dreams. I set goals before leaving the house that I believed were obtainable (with recovery always being in the forefront) getting a job; my own place to live; and going back to college. In the first year of being out of the house I was able to find a job which helped me to get my own apartment and then I took the appropriate steps to getting into college. I constantly set new goals for my self and every time I not only accomplish them but I exceed my expectations. My first year of college I received a scholarship for being the top student in a class of 40. Now in my 4<sup>th</sup> year of sobriety I'm in a new province attending University. I attend meetings and church regularly. My family has embraced this new me with love and appreciation. The list really does go on and on..

The gifts of recovery are beautiful and endless, yes it takes work, and yes it is not always great; however, the life I have written while in recovery is far better in quality than the life I once authored.

I'm so grateful for Our House and the wonderful counselors and staff that help teach, support and guide me unto the man I am today.

Praise and Glory to the God of my understanding for wherever I go, YOU are there, and I take comfort in knowing I will never be alone.