

# Faye's Story

***By Faye P.***

My name is Faye and I am an alcoholic. Like everyone else who has made this admission, it was not supposed to be this way...

I began drinking at the age of 14 and from my first, planned drink with friends, my only purpose was to get as drunk as I possibly could. I grew up with a lot of alcohol around me and it seemed like it was my birthright to continue the tradition. From my warped understanding, alcohol made you happier, stronger and prettier. It was only when people like my dad were dry, that they were miserable and sad. Aggressive, abusive behavior seemed to be flare up at any time, whether alcohol was involved or not. At least if I was drunk, stoned or caught up in a fantasy, I was less likely to get hurt.

I drank and did drugs throughout high school, skipping class whenever possible. If I thought that I already knew what the teacher was teaching or if I found the material difficult, I was "out of there." I loved to learn, but since it didn't seem to be cool, I pretended that it didn't matter. Somehow, I finished high school and got accepted at a university music program, studying piano.

The day that I arrived at university, I realized that I didn't belong and that I was not like everyone else. They were talented and could play instruments because they had practiced. I had to keep my inability to perform to myself and the only way that I could look and act normal, was to secretly binge drink whenever possible. No one, except me, knew how I craved alcohol. It was the only thing that I needed to keep going. I had absolutely no self confidence.

Fast forward to a family and career life which on the outside seemed pretty wonderful. I had a remarkable career, a beautiful son and a successful husband. From all outside appearances, life was great. It wasn't enough for me so I continued to drink whenever possible. Since the time that I was eighteen, I was a daily drinker. I drank to get drunk at least two days of seven. Looking back, I realize that I was pretty miserable, but I had stopped feeling since I was about sixteen.

During my forties and leading into what seems to be the longest mid-life crisis on record, things started to fall apart. My marriage broke up and I was going through an incredibly stressful time at work. I started to run marathons because I figured that no marathon runner could be an alcoholic. I also needed a way to burn the excess calories. After about three weeks of training, I created my 'run and drink' schedule, which now proves to me that alcoholics can be marathon runners. We can do anything.

At the end of my forties I lost my job and I crumbled. I wanted to kill myself because I did not want to go through the pain of getting to know myself. For someone who had blocked all feeling, the desire to die was pretty compelling. The only purpose for me to go outside was to look for a bridge from which to jump. I figured that I would keep drinking until I had the

courage to end it all. My greatest fear was waking up in a hospital where someone might try to help me. I had to do it without fail.

As I was preparing my finances for my son and preparing lists for him, I kept thinking that these thoughts and actions were ridiculous. How could this happen to me? I kept trying to drink it away, but nothing was working. The only person who I was talking to on the outside was my landlord and he was starting to ask about all the bottles.

The morning when it seemed like it was time to take action, I decided that I would check out AA. I walked into a meeting that night and I felt like I was home. There was a 21 year old kid who was telling my story. I somehow managed to keep the facade going for a much longer time than him. My only hope was that he would find happiness before I did.

At first, I didn't care about all the references to God in the program because in Brooklyn we were a very diverse mix of religions and cultures. Then I moved to Fort Erie, where the references to God were much more traditional and pronounced. AA was still the only thing that I could count on so I tried to let the God references slide. With my strong Unitarian Universalist beliefs, this was a great challenge. While I seek worship and ritual ceremonies, I do not believe in praying to God or to a Higher Power. I don't feel like I am a chosen one and I don't believe that any power sends me anywhere. While I love the lessons from my Christian faith and Christian friends, being open to nature and meditating works better for me at this point in my recovery. I like the idea of being connected to nature without something in between.

I am now the town agnostic and I try to learn from my Christian friends. Some are becoming interested in a non-theist approach and it is not negatively affecting their sobriety. I am trying to stay true to myself by sharing what is working for me in an honest and compassionate way. I have to remember that I go to AA meetings to stay sober and to live a more meaningful life. It doesn't matter what I or anyone else believes. It is how one is humbled and practices the steps, which is important.

AA is extremely important to me and sharing the gift with others is crucial. It's not easy. I am grateful to my sponsors and my fellow members for showing me how to live a life that I never thought was possible. I don't know as much now as I did when I was drinking, but now the journey is actually interesting and for the most part it is fun. After a period of not wanting to face all of those who I assumed were more capable than me, I am back working in the industry that I love. I used to hate many of them, but now I like almost everyone, even those who are more successful than me. I am passionate about what I do and I can show that I care. Learning new things and accepting that I do not know everything has brought me incredible joy. I used to think that sobriety would be horrible and that it was only for losers. I now know differently and I am glad that I have come out an isolated shell which made me miserable and nearly killed me. I want to share this gift with everyone, without barriers and rules.

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