

FLIP SIDE

Association of Participating Service Users



LOVE

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www.apsuonline.org.au*

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Lo

Michael and I met in supported accommodation now closed down due to lack of funding. It was The Odyssey Peninsula Short Term Engagement Program (OPSTEP). It's basically a community rehab, which I entered straight out of detox. He was the sweetest guy, despite dealing with 20 years worth of marijuana demons, he always had time for me, and a smile. We share many of the same interests and goals. We liked the same sort of movies and music, shared a hate of one of our fellow inmates, were both divorced, shy of love, and shared a goal of complete abstinence following a long life of self and family destruction through drug addiction, and associated behavioural issues. Despite the fact that we had completely different upbringings, had separate drugs of choice and a long road of personal recovery to focus on, we found each other. The timing couldn't have been worse, but we made it work. We had arranged one night to go as a group to the movies, but the others piked out and it was just us. We went and saw the movie WALL-E (which we both still have the stubs for): a great little kids animated romance story with lots of aww's and ooh's and more than a few tears from both of us. As much as I loved the movie, I was so acutely aware of Michael throughout the whole movie, and I couldn't get him off my mind. I decided I wanted him for my own, and set about making that happen. As it happened, it didn't take much arm twisting. On the way out of the theatre, I linked my arm through Michael's and we exited the theatre arm in arm. Neither of us said anything for the longest time then I said: 'I'm not making you uncomfortable am I?' to which he replied with a big gulp 'No'. I know he didn't mean it but I took him at his word anyway and after stifling a few giggles, we walked the entire way home arm in arm.

When we got back to my place (a double story five bedder on the beach in Frankston – how's that for a rehab?) we watched a movie with some of the other residents and then disappeared down stairs to my room where we spent the whole night telling each other every detail of our lives: soaking each other up. Subconsciously I think I was trying to dare him to walk away. I told him all my scary

ve Long & Prosper

secrets, trying to keep myself safe, putting it all out there, and giving him all the ammunition he needed to hate me now before I grew to care if he stayed or not. By the end of that intensely emotional night I knew already that I cared very much about him. Michael and I spent the next few weeks spending every spare moment together snatching time to be together in between groups and counselling sessions and group therapy. Most of the other residents in the program knew we were involved, especially after this one day when we were lying in the sun on the beach for about four hours, talking away. We got a call from another resident asking if we were coming to group. Then we were picked up by a car load of them. We knew then we were outed. Luckily it was not against the policy of the program to form relationships. Eventually we came out to the program coordinators who took it upon themselves to give us a little group relationship therapy and teach us the importance of using the communication skills we were learning at the program, in our relationship. To this day those communication skills have been the foundation of our relationship. They did however prohibit us from spending any time at each others places, overnight during the week, and suggested that we focus on ourselves and our personal programs during the week, and get together only on weekends. We agreed of course whole heartedly, and we even tried. It lasted all of about 15 minutes. We were lost in each other again, easily enough because Michael was sharing a program flat on the creek with a guy who didn't come home for weeks at a time. He was off staying with his mother, and working and getting ready to graduate the program, leaving us the two bedroom cosy-little flat all to ourselves.

I got sick that summer with glandular fever. Michael nursed me back to health, slowly and carefully, sealing his fate with mine. I knew then that I would do anything to keep this guy, the first I ever knew who truly loved me without beating or hurting or manipulating me, without wanting anything from me. He just loved me, and I him. Michael graduated a month before me, leaving me in Frankston while he moved back in with his parents in

Moonee Ponds. We spent a month going through a lot of phone credit and only actually seeing each other on the weekends, it was hell, but we made it. Then I spent another six weeks in another supported accommodation intensive phase, where he couldn't even visit (though of course he did), before I finally got my own place where we could be alone together on the weekends. Michael had started school by then though, and we truly only had the weekends, but were both so busy with life that it didn't matter.

After six months or so we moved in together, creating a home for our family, and we started to share custody of his son. I started at school too, and life got busy and fast. Through all of that, we continued to talk to each other fully and completely being open and honest even when we didn't want to or felt uncomfortable, and we grew together stronger. It's been 1 year and 8 months now since that night at the cinema, and since that time Michael and I have moved in to our own place together. We have a beautiful two bedroom unit in Mount Waverley, we remain abstinent together, we share custody of his 11 year old son whom I love dearly and we are juggling school and work and life and most importantly communicating every worry and joy to each other. We are more in love each day that we are together, and we know what makes each other tick.

We were told so many times by rehabbers and fellowship members that it would never last, because rehab romances don't last; but I'm here to tell you that they do. As long as you have rules, commitments and separate strong realistic goals for your own recovery, there is nothing sweeter than watching another addict grow into a beautiful person, beside you, holding your hand while you grow too. Co-dependence is not love: love is respect, and consideration, and independence, before interdependence. Love is about making the most of the good times and the bad. Love isn't about good luck, but good management, and communication. Base your relationships on that, and you will love long and prosper.

ANGEL

THE MAN I WANT TO BE

**THE DESIRE TO SUCCEED IN EVERYTHING I DO,
ABILITY TO EXCEED MY OWN EXPECTATIONS,
RESOURCEFULNESS TO MAKE SOMETHING OUT
OF NOTHING THROUGH MY OWN UNIQUE CREATIONS,
TO RELAX, HAVE THE UPPER HAND ON MY OWN
FRUSTATIONS AND LEARN PATIENCE.**

**BE FREE, TRAVEL THE WORLD
SPREADING THE POSITIVE WORD,
TO HELP THE YOUTH WITH THE RELIABILITY OF RAW
TRUTH.**

**AND WHEN I FIND THE RIGHT ONE,
GO SNOWBOARDING WITH MY GIRL.**

**I HAVE DEDICATION FOR MY ART,
I LONG TO PUSH IT FAR,
MASTER THIS QUEST AND SUPERIORIZE MY
CRAFT.**

**AND LUNGE HEAD FIRST THROUGH
OPPORTUNITY'S DOOR,
BECAUSE TO MAKE A TRUE CHAMPION IT
TAKES A BIT MORE...**

**DYLAN HEWITT
QUASTA 24.6.10**



LOVE IN ALL ITS GUISES

As a small boy I remember waiting for Dad to get home from work. My twin brother and I would run to him, grab one of his fingers in both of our hands, and he'd spin us in a wizzy-dizzy until we screamed for him to stop. *I loved it when Dad got home from work.*

I remember as a child the never-ending adventures my brothers and I would have through our backyard during the endless days of summer. Cops and robbers, cowboys and Indians, armies, explorers and some game with swords and old broom handles were just some of many. *I loved those games; I could be anything I wanted to be.*

When I left primary school and began high school it was hard—I left behind all my friends and teachers. I left behind six years of my life. In a short time, though, high school was great: I was well liked, and popular. I could say and do things I couldn't have in primary school. I got in lots of trouble. *I loved being popular.*

The first girlfriend I ever had was in year seven. I'd never felt those feelings before; I'd never had anyone look at me like that before. She was the first girl I ever kissed. *It was love at first sight.*

The first time I ever got drunk was great fun; me and my mates went down to the skate park, and drank some bottles of Spumante. We called it 'two buck chuck'. We all threw up everywhere. I started drinking every weekend after that night, sometimes before school. *I loved getting drunk with my mates.*

I left school when I was 15; I started working in a factory. It was okay working there as it gave me money to buy pot. By then I smoked pot everyday; I could work a 12 hour day with no worries, as long as I had a smoke waiting for me at home. *I loved that smoking pot made everything okay.*

At 16 my depression got really bad: I thought about killing myself. I smoked dope and drank more than ever, I did a lot of other drugs as well. As long as I was wasted I could hold off most of the despair. I started getting in trouble with the police more often. Things were bad and getting worse. *I loved being wasted, I didn't have to feel.*

At 17 I went to bed for a long time. I didn't eat much and would sleep for days on end. I couldn't see any point, the only person I talked to was my dealer. I didn't talk to anyone else. I was so tired. *Sleep was the only thing I loved then.*

At 21 I'd been using heroin for a couple of years; I couldn't work and did a lot of crime. It all caught up with me and I went to prison. I weighed 56 kilos. Jail was good for me, I got off methadone and read a lot. I didn't have to make any choices and nothing really mattered anymore. *I loved not caring anymore.*

After jail I really tried to get my life back on track. I was put into housing in a new area, and had a worker. I was never going to use drugs again, and was going to go back to school. I thought things would be different for me. *I loved feeling that things might be different.*

By my 23rd birthday I was using worse than ever. I had a load of charges pending, and had been to a mental hospital for a speed psychosis. I thought I'd forgotten how to sleep. I got told to go to detox and rehab, they said: 'I was going to die'. I didn't care about dying; I just wanted to escape my life. I was so paranoid. *I loved escaping to rehab; everything was so messy.*



APSU (Association of Participating Service Users)

APSU believes that people who use alcohol and other drug treatment services are the reason the system exists; their needs, strengths and expertise should drive the system. APSU is run by service users for service users and has an active member base. We invite you to join us in having a say. APSU membership is free, confidential and open to anyone interested in voicing their opinions & ideas on the issues facing service users today. We need your help to give us all a fair go. To become a member please fill out the form below or go to: www.apsuonline.org.au

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I wish to become a member of APSU and I would like to:

Receive the quarterly APSU FLIPSIDE magazine

Be sent information on how to become involved

I am a: Service user Service provider

Family member Other

How did you find out about APSU? _____

Language spoken at home: _____

Cultural identity: _____

Age: 16-25 25-35 36-45 46-65 over 65

Other issues:

Physical disability Mental health Visual Hearing

Speech Acquired brain injury

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/Suburb: _____ Postcode: _____

Phone: _____ Mobile: _____

Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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Some of my happiest memories involve that first rehab. I was safe from myself there. I thought if I stayed there long enough they'd cure me. I left after three months because I thought I was ready. Honestly, though, I left to use. Things got back to the same quickly. Six weeks later I went back to rehab and stayed for a year. *I loved rehab—I was safe from myself.*

After staying in rehab for a year I thought I was fixed. I was on medication for a bipolar disorder and living with my brother and Dad again. I was positive but didn't really know what I was going to do with myself. I knew I could handle smoking dope again and having the odd taste. I was in control now. It turns out I couldn't and wasn't. Within three months everything was back to the way it always was. *Part of me loved not being in control.*

Funnily enough things got worse than they'd ever been. My Dad's house got raided three times in five months by the Police. He wasn't very happy about that. I stumbled into a job working nights at a service station. I started using more than I'd ever used before. I would not sleep for weeks on end. *By now I'd forgotten how to love anything.*

I quit my job because I knew they'd discover what I'd been up to. I had a huge habit and really wished I was dead. I left Dad's place after my brother told me he wished I'd just die. I lived on the streets for a few weeks because I was too fried to do anything else. *I thought no one loved me then.*

Mum made me go to detox, but I wanted to go. I didn't want to die. I went back to rehab but only stayed a couple of months. I realised there was nothing there for me anymore. After leaving, I realised this was my life, it was never going to be different. I gave up. I just used. *I had decided not to love anything or anyone.*

I moved home again. Ten or so months later I attacked my brother during a psychosis and went back to prison. Jail wasn't any different from the first time. Nothing had changed. To get parole I had to go to a rehab. I told them: 'Rehab doesn't work for me, I'm broken or something' they said it was up to me. I said: 'anything's better than prison.' *Loving anything was the furthest thing from my mind.*

I fell in love with a girl in that rehab. She wasn't interested, so I used again, but it didn't do what I needed it to do. I had nothing then. She'd gone by the time I got back. My worker told me it was for the best. Looking back he was right. At the time, though, I was so sad. *Love hurts.*

My worker in the rehab told me things could be different, that I could be different. I said: 'I really doubt it'. He said if he could do it, I could. He introduced me to the word 'recovery' and showed me where to find it. *I loved the little bit of hope that word gave me.*

It's been almost five years since I've needed a rehab. I've been in love and out of love since then. I've been back to school and worked a few different jobs. Some of my family is even back in my life. I'm able to get up in the mornings and do what I have to do on any given day. I have friends that don't use drugs and I have people in my life who love me for me. But most of all I have hope and I'm open to all the possibilities that my new life offers me. *I love the possibilities...*

DAVE

The Essence of My Recovery is Love

The word 'love' congers up many thoughts, emotions, and feelings. When asked to write about love from a recovering user's point of view I went mentally blank. How could this relate to a person in recovery? I took time out to meditate on the word and how it applied to my recovery and then the answer came. Love was actually the pure essence of my recovery.

You see I was always on a never ending quest to search or find it in another person. Having experienced brief moments of it, the rest of my time was spent in sadness, depression, feelings of worthlessness, and self doubt; wondering where it had gone, was I unlovable?

For most of my life, I understood the word 'love' to be a state of great joy and great misery. I associated words like: happiness, joy, acceptance, bliss, nurturing, comfort, safety, and excitement—with the state of being in love. However in my out of love state, which was the greater part of my life by far, I experienced: depression, sadness, hopelessness, anger; a complete disregard for the beauty of life itself, and a hatred of humanity as a whole.

Unknown quote 'You can't love anybody truly unless you first learn to love yourself.' It took 48 years of living for the penny to drop. For my recovery to be successful I had to learn to love myself, in other words I had to nurture myself (good food and exercise), put myself in safe situations (stay away from tempting

drug orientated influences), and to love myself (not think badly of myself for what I have done).

By looking after myself the negative thoughts I entertained (hopelessness, feelings of self doubt, a depressive outlook on life) slowly evaporated.

I am not saying that everything becomes airy-fairy, I still confront all the issues of living and emotions; but I now know that I can deal with whatever life throws at me in a drug-free state.

I am learning to live again, step by step, one day at a time. I thank and appreciate all those in the AOD industry that have supported my recovery in a humane and non-judgmental way. Peace to all.

FRANK





WHAT'S *LOVE* GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Every time I entered the supermarket I felt the need to place the feeling I had in my chest into its voluptuous red packaging; I always felt that she was available to me, and that we were a match made in heaven.

I mean we had little conversation, which suited me, due to being a bit of an introvert and not really wanting to express my feelings in public; so we had regular but brief encounters that were often based around a movie or our favorite TV series.

So you think you can dance was a red hot favourite. Sometimes when I felt lonely or a bit down we'd curl up on the couch in front of the heater, sometimes we were in the fast lane, on the road, on the way to an appointment or a social gathering. I'd pick her up and the magic in the car was electrifying. I felt free— alive. The rush after our encounters was addictive!

I knew that something wasn't right, and when I was really honest with myself I knew that our relationship had to end in its current form, but grasping that truth was difficult, so I chose to just push on and enjoy it for as long as I could.

It wasn't her fault, that it was all my doing, it was difficult to sit with that truth though, that I would have to change my behaviour. I was the one who would have to end these long standing liaisons. It was obvious, we were becoming isolated, separated from the world. Our relationship had led to: isolation, shame, guilt, and it had become a dirty secret. Something had to change. It had made me unmanageable and powerless to the intoxicating affect.

That's it, I had enough. I ended it and I felt free. I felt like I went through a detoxing period after that. I felt withdrawn and lost. I'd changed my behaviour and I was adrift, but I had a sense of freedom and was willing to do what it took to maintain that and I did! I put the MALTESERS down. My little sugar babies.

No more chocolate, WOW! I said it and I've done it. All that guilt and shame is gone, the feeling of love is still there, but I have learnt my lesson, for now, I hope...

MATT

One addiction for another

I am a 45 year-old professional— a mother and grandmother and from the age of 13 I have been an addict. I lit up my first cigarette when I was about ten years old and the lighting of bong and joints quickly followed. My addiction to dope never wavered as I added onto one addiction more than another. During my pregnancy with my first child I was diagnosed with severe depression/ bi-polar and was put on a welcomed cocktail of: antidepressants, antipsychotics, Valium, and Temazepam. After both pregnancies these medications were increased and at one stage I was taking up to 18 prescribed medications a day.

Back then I loved and needed them all, but still my body craved more. The first time I injected speed I felt so sharp and alert and it gave me an insatiable appetite for more stimulation. I felt quite invincible often going on two or three day binges where I wouldn't eat or sleep. During these times I felt creative and gifted and would write and make plans to do, and be someone powerful and dynamic in society. But the more wizzy I'd shoot the less I'd feel in control and eventually my mind and body would be on autopilot and I just couldn't relax or shutdown anymore. To counteract these overpowering feelings I was introduced to smack and at last I thought I'd found the perfect balance. Speed kept me sharp and productive and smack helped me to come down, unwind, and eventually got me off to sleep.

So that's how I functioned for many years. That was until I had maxed out my credit cards and I'd worn out my welcome mat with family and friends. Then my drug use became a fight for survival. I robbed stores and hocked electrical goods and I sold my soul to the devil.

I did whatever it took to keep the magic and warmth I derived from drugs pleasantly coursing through my veins. Towards the end I literally ran out of veins! They all collapsed and I was endlessly and painfully stabbing around for an entry point; as most users will know we become very creative and find so many ways to get that drug happening. The groin, between the toes, in the neck and many places that would make you blush.

Eventually the money ran out along with the friendships and acquaintances and all my past ingenious ways of acquiring drugs had been exhausted too. My skin was almost transparent, my body gaunt, and hollow-thin. When I looked in the mirror I no longer recognised the person with the haunted and sunken eyes staring back at me. I had lost everything; a marriage and the trust of my children and friends.

I also took up a new addiction; playing the pokies and gambling. When I look back on my past I see the destruction I reaped and I realise that whatever I used or did ,death was the underlying issue. That was always beneath the surface.

I had just masked the pain for a while, never really dealing with it till now. In

RIVER FRIENDS

the past 12 months I have been seeing a counselor through Gamblers Help at St Lukes in Bendigo and it's been through these sessions that I've been given the strategies and the tools to deal with, not only my addictive behaviours, but also to make positive and lasting changes.

One of the most important things I've been able to do is forgive myself and accept I have no power or abilities to change the past. To fret over the past or to beat myself up for a minute more is not only wasted energy but stealing the joy, I could have, by choosing to now live in the present. It is only in the present and in how I choose to live today that has any substance, or bearing, on how I will live tomorrow. I've wasted so much of my life dwelling on the past, which I can never change. I'm now working in a job that fulfills me and find contentment in the simplest things that so many people, who may never have suffered with addictions, take for granted. I've rebuilt my life for the better and it is my goal to inspire and encourage others who are battling addiction; that while there is still life there is still hope! It doesn't matter what age you are it's never too late to beat your evil foe!

It's been almost ten years since beating my addictions to alcohol, prescribed medications, and intravenous drug use. It has also been just over a year since I beat my addiction to gambling and finally, in the last six months, I have overcome my addiction to marijuana and cigarettes.

I am now, finally, and totally addiction free. I look after my body and feed both my mind and my body good and healthy things. It is never too late to change and I am living proof of this.

JEN

It was quaint:

She showered, dressed and perfumed

Looking her best for the river

Leaving her friends to walk along the riverbank

Merging with the seemingly distorted panes of glass

So heavy was the rain.

Until the rivers meet as one, she followed the running water

Joining with the other, the differing hues

Aligned bubbling and shimmering;

The woman showered, dressed and perfumed watched this phenomenon

Continuing despite her

Enrobed in relentless water pouring from the softy blackened sky

To the woman sitting beneath the rain strewn window

The woman's friend spoke of this quaintness mockingly

Whilst the listener cracked and crumbled with worry;

And with this slightly marred loyalty, brimming with indignation,

The listener took to the bank once the water had subsided

Buried the malicious words in the granulated and soggy mud,

Returned to the friendship circle

her finger nails encrusted with river soil.

Running the rivers are locked in by the surrounding hills.

REGINA



Winter
Fun
Open Heart
arts