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Singapore AA

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DAILY REPRIEVE

The most important person in the room



From the editor

Dear fellows

Welcome to the latest edition of the Daily Reprieve, the newsletter for Singapore's Alcoholics Anonymous community.

It's been a while since the last one but we hope to be able to bring newsletters to you roughly quarterly through 2025. Progress, not perfection!

In this edition, we're focusing on the most important person in the room: the newcomer. If you're reading this, you have most likely been a newcomer at an AA meeting, and maybe you are one now. That means you know how difficult it is for most of us to come to our first AA meeting, or first few meetings, and how important it is that newcomers are made to feel welcome.

As the AA Responsibility statement says: "I am Responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."

We should all take that responsibility and service seriously. But sometimes humour is just what the newcomer needs, too. People are rarely joyful when they start out in AA and a lighter touch can help us take ourselves less seriously. I remember coming into a meeting in Hong Kong the day after a relapse, probably looking like death warmed up. I sat in the corner and didn't say anything. A veteran AA, who I still see today, looked me up and down with a knowing smile. "Good night, was it?" he asked me. Sick, scared and miserable as I was, I had to laugh. It helped me realise that I wasn't unique and that, bad as my situation was, it wasn't so bad that you couldn't laugh about it.

That was a few years ago now and, by the grace of God, I haven't had a drink since then. I sometimes wonder how decisive a factor that fellow's warmth and humour was to keeping me sober in the early days of recovery. Who knows, but I'm pretty sure it helped him too.

As Bill and Bob's own experience makes clear, I've also come to realise how much my own sobriety depends on working with newcomers. To me, this is one of the spiritual paradoxes at the heart of recovery: the more I am able to give to others, the more I receive. I only wish I did more of it!

If you're a newcomer in AA, you are very welcome here. And if you see a newcomer, please look after them - and maybe crack a joke or two.








Finally, I am deeply grateful to the fellows who contributed to this newsletter, and to Mehraj for his design work and support. It goes without saying that we could use more contributors and more talented folk to help put this newsletter together! If you'd like to be of service to the Singapore AA fellowship in this way, please do get in touch at newsletter.singaporeaa@gmail.com.

One day at a time.

Adam H

Singapore, 6 April 2025

Contents

04		I am not an alcoholic!
05		They welcomed me, broken as I was
07		The attention and sharing made me cry
08		Now-familiar strangers
09		Rollercoaster of emotions
10		A deep, natural flow of love and care
11		My father ruined alcoholism for me

I am not an Alcoholic!



My life was not unmanageable, or so I thought. I had a beautiful family, an amazing career, a house, a car and money, so I could not possibly be an alcoholic, right? Not me!

People were telling me that I drank too much, was an embarrassment to go out with, had a problem and needed help. To appease the naysayers, I decided to complete a three month outpatient addiction programme, not because I was an alcoholic but just to shut people up. I learnt so much about the disease of addiction. I completed group meetings with others who had problems with alcohol, porn, gambling, sex and drugs. I heard from amazing people with fascinatingly sad stories to tell. I graduated from the programme, hooray. Myself and my family were relieved that I was fixed, cured, never to drink to black out again! I couldn't wait to get back out there and drink like a gentleman and prove everyone wrong.

What happened next was months of blackouts, empty promises, relapse after relapse, my children crying and begging me to stop. My marriage of decades was falling apart, my children were barely talking to me and with no job to speak of I was still convinced I wasn't an alcoholic. Why oh why could I not beat this thing? I am a strong, independent, strong-willed person: where was I going wrong?

After a much-begrudged family intervention, I was put through to the national AA hotline. I'd seen AA meetings in the movies. They were depressing, sad, grey and despairing, right? What if people found out that I had joined AA? What would people

think of me? What if I knew someone in a meeting? Fear, self pity, resentment and grief overwhelmed me. Remember...I'm not an alcoholic!

On the phone was an AA fellow with the kindest, most gentle voice. This angel listened, comforted me and explained what was happening to me. How did this stranger know exactly how I was feeling and what I was going through?



Wow! Here was someone who got me and felt like I did. This fellow came out of their way to pick me up and drive me thirty minutes to my first meeting. They explained they had been sober for many decades and I was genuinely intrigued as to why they still went to meetings. Their sincere response astounded me, "By you calling the hotline you kept me sober today." I was baffled.

At my first meeting I was greeted with warm hugs and an abundance of phone numbers with gentle encouragement to call them. What a friendly bunch, I thought. I sat and listened to share after share. It was like they were telling my life story. Here I was thinking I was all alone in this world, but now this room full of strangers was telling my story. The shares were of sadness, desperation, loneliness, lies and isolation but then something wonderful happened. These shares I heard concluded powerfully with words of hope, love, laughter, strength, experience and faith. It wasn't like the movies after all!

As my AA journey as a newcomer continued, I met many wonderful fellows, one of whom would become my

sponsor. My sponsor spoke with such kindness, wisdom, warmth and great sense. My sponsor gently encouraged me to meditate, surrender to my higher power (whatever that maybe), connect with fellows, share my thoughts and feelings, acknowledge my resentments and my role in them, and to be of service to the fellowship.

Today I am sober, just for today, because I didn't pick up that first drink.

Here is what I did today stop the insanity in my mind, my body and my soul:

- I meditated.
- I got on my knees and surrendered to my Higher Power and asked for help to not pick up that first drink.
- Called my amazing fellows, just to say hi and see how they are doing today.
- Attended a meeting where I laughed a lot and cried a little.
- Shared at a meeting
- Wrote my gratitude list.
- Did my evening inventory.
- Kissed my dog.

I finally understood why I kept relapsing: because I was alone. I was missing identification, connection to fellows, connection to a power greater than myself and service to the fellowship. I was missing unification.

My name is Singapore and I am a grateful alcoholic.

They welcomed me, broken as I was

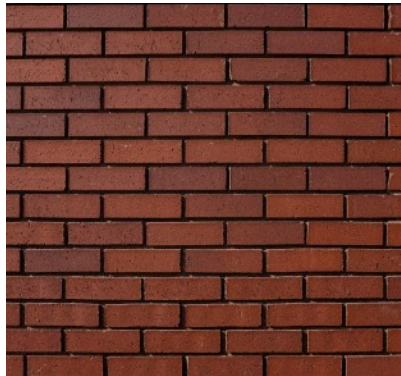
I was lost, adrift in a place where I was consumed by a darkness so deep, I could no longer recognise the woman in the reflection. I was drowning in depression, addiction and deep anger, weighed down by a past that seemed to have no end.

Alcohol had become my refuge, my way to numb the pain and find a fleeting moment of peace. It blurred the memories of a childhood and a past marked by disappointment and betrayal. Alcohol allowed me to forget the truth of how broken I had become.



For years, I blamed my father, my past, and everyone who had hurt me. But in the quiet moments, when the noise of my life would fade, I knew the truth I was not able to accept: I had become a prisoner of my own emotions and addiction. I was trapped in a vicious cycle of self-destruction, and I did not know how to break free.

I had always believed that addiction was a synonym for weakness. Fear was the inability to be accountable,



and mental illness was a disgusting crutch people used to avoid facing their responsibilities.

I told myself I was not like them, that I had the strength to handle everything on my own. After all, people like my father had abused me, used mental illness as an excuse, and I never wanted to fall into the same trap. How could I? How could I allow myself to become the very thing I despised? So I built walls, convincing myself that I could manage on my own, that I did not need anyone. But deep down, I was struggling with loneliness and depression. Alcohol became the escape. But alcohol stopped working.

The numbness faded, and I found myself sinking deeper. The weight of my unresolved pain pressed harder; it was poison. The hurt was still there, haunting me, creeping into my thoughts like an unwelcome shadow. I had lost myself entirely. I would drink to feel high, and when I felt that high, I needed it to last just one glass more.

That fatal glass would knock me out, and for the next few days, I would slump in bed, confused, guilt-ridden and insecure after the blackout. I was insane.

And then, in what I can only describe as a moment of grace, I found Alcoholics Anonymous.

I googled online for a rehab, for a professional to help me, and I chanced upon an AA meeting online.

Logging into my first AA Zoom meeting felt like stepping into an unreal world. I was cynical about whether the meetings would be helpful. I was apprehensive about the sharing. I was not even sure what it meant to be an alcoholic. The members started sharing, and when they spoke, I heard my own pain in their words. I saw my story reflected in their eyes.

There was no judgment and no condemnation, only acceptance. They welcomed me, broken as I was, and in that moment, I felt a glimmer of hope. Within that week, I attended an onsite meeting. I broke down and cried, comforted by the realisation that I was not alone.

Not long after, God, in His quiet but profound way, placed a sponsor in my path. This person became the key to my understanding of the AA program. My sponsor was not just a guide, but a friend, a constant source of encouragement and a firm advisor when needed.

My sponsor helped me see that my addiction was not just about alcohol but about everything beneath the surface: the wounds, the insecurities, the unresolved pain. I had a bodily reaction to alcohol, one that, when triggered, would always pull me back into addiction.



The sharing from the different members helped me make sense of the condition and this propelled my understanding of the complexity of my addiction, which is rooted in my history, experiences, beliefs and maybe even inherited tendencies. But, with God's grace and the support of AA, I found the courage to confront and work through it.

Deep down, I had been searching for a safe place where I could feel accepted and understood. A space where I could heal and grow. AA provided that. It created a safe space within me, and through its structure and fellowship, I found direct access to God. This was my greatest gift, as I had lost that connection when I turned to alcohol. In my wildest dreams, I never expected God to be so gracious, to take me back the moment I admitted how weak I truly was.

The program has taught me that while I am powerless over alcohol, I am not powerless over my recovery. I have a choice each day, and with the tools that AA has given me, I am learning to build my life anew.

I have made peace with the fact that my addiction will always be a part of me, but it does not define me. It is hard to come to terms with the fact that the wounds I carry, the scars from my past, will no longer control me. But the program gives me the strength to continue to move forward with sobriety as my anchor and God's guidance as my

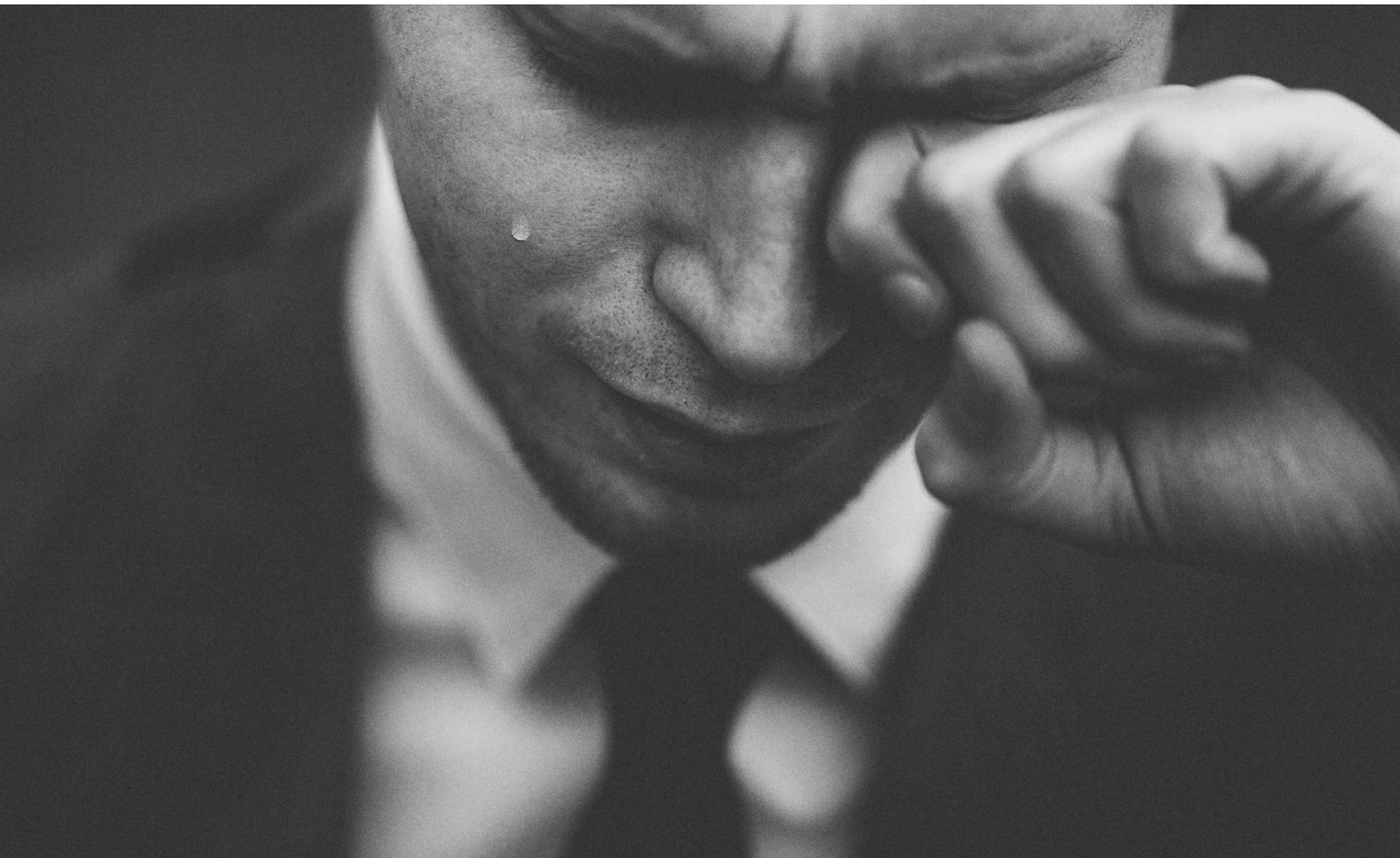


compass. And the bonus is the new community He has already put in place for all of us, over 90 years ago. Today, as I reflect on my fourth-month anniversary in AA, I am filled with gratitude. I know I still have a long way to go, but I am no longer afraid of the journey. I am no longer ashamed of my past. I am learning to love myself again, to forgive myself, and to trust in the process.

I am vigilant in my sobriety, knowing that each day is a gift, and with each step forward, I am becoming the person I was always meant to be.

AA has given me the safety and strength I've longed for, and through it, I am learning to embrace the freedom that comes with true healing.

And I am at peace.



The attention and sharing made me cry

My name is Ari and I am 64 years old. My drinking started in my early 20s.

I was diagnosed with depression and alcoholism in my 40s. I came to be aware of AA and its 12 steps 20 years ago. I had several relapses and this time, with one year and six months, I am still a newcomer.

The first time I attended a full capacity meeting at Damien Hall, the attention and sharing given to me made me cry. Six months later, I relapsed. Not knowing what it means, I made a geographical move to do with something about my career. I felt disappointment, failure

and loss of respect and confidence. There was a no-hope attitude in my family – my wife and two kids.

I managed to work for the next five years, drinking on and off and controlling it somewhat, as long my wallet had money. After a romantic experience, I ended up drinking with no control.

I sought refuge in a halfway house for the next six months because I could go not go home and didn't want to spoil relationships, as they were worse by then.

I was consistently taking antidepressant pills and it helped. But I mixed that with alcohol and kept relapsing.

After excuses, justification and relapses, I am now committed to AA and its 12 steps, especially step 1 and step 12. I am a newcomer!

Ari

Now-familiar strangers



“Dear higher power, thank you for keeping me sober another day. I pray only for the knowledge of your will for me and the power to carry that out. I pray that you keep me sober again tomorrow.”

I had never prayed before in my life except for a quick death while violently ill from yet another bender. These days, I say the above prayer every night in sincere gratitude.

When I attended my first few meetings, people I didn’t know offered me a slew of advice. Praying was, at that point, the most difficult thing. My aversion to the whole idea of surrendering to some being that I could not see or feel made me stay away from meetings, and from the people who suggested it.

The result of that was a deeper spiral into the bottle and the madness that ensues. After a few more months of blackouts and debt, I dragged my sorry ass back to the meetings to figure out what worked to keep these strangers seemingly happy without alcohol in them.

That turning point was my surrender. I have surrendered to my disease of addiction, and I have surrendered my lack of self-control. These now-familiar strangers tell me that they are my fellows in learning how to stay sober and live a sober life. I found it weird really as it made me think of hobbits, elves and a certain invincible ring.

One fellow suggested to me that simple prayer that I can use even if I had taken a drink that day. It was more to build my

brain’s muscle memory and thank my as-yet-unrevealed higher power that, hey, I had one hour of sobriety just by making one meeting that day. It seemed incredulous but I was desperate.

So, I started small with that one prayer. Then the serenity prayer. Then a few more prayers as time went by. Some months later, I put down my last drink. I attended more meetings because I started to enjoy learning from my friends in recovery.

Unbeknown to me, I had completed steps 1 to 3. A fellow offered to be my sponsor when he saw my suffering. He walked with me during those painful first few months of withdrawals, self-discovery and tons of mistakes, imparting invaluable knowledge to me. I have endless gratitude for his guidance to this day.

Today, my higher power takes shape in different forms to me. It evolves, it lives in me and around me. It guides me on this miraculous and wonderful journey with the spirit of the fellowship. All I have to do? Keep coming back.

Anonymous





Rollercoaster of emotions

I am sure I speak for many members when I describe the early days and weeks of AA as a rollercoaster of emotions.

There is the joy and elation at finally finding not just one other person, but a whole collection of people who share your affliction.

The amazement and gratitude at the kindness and support offered, and the hope and excitement that after all these long years of despair a solution has finally presented itself.

In contrast, there are also the feelings of guilt and remorse that surface, hitherto buried under an impenetrable bed of alcohol. The embarrassing memories that we never need dwell on when drunk.

Then the fear that comes with the true comprehension of the requirements of steps four and five.

However, for me the overriding emotion is one of immense relief.

Relief that I can stop lying to myself and finally admit I am an alcoholic, but most of all relief that I am no longer fighting this alone.

For a lifetime, all of us have been stuck in a never-ending, one-sided contest against alcohol. We are reminded at the start of each meeting of the various attempts we had all made to win this contest, each doomed to failure but also each characterised by individual action against an opponent who had our number every time.

We alone never stood a chance. But we as a Fellowship, each of us in the service of each other and guided by the will of a Higher Power? That's a completely different equation. While this is the very early stage of recovery, for the first time ever I am not facing this challenge alone, and for that there are no words that will truly describe the gratitude I feel.

The road ahead is still difficult and requires daily dedication. We know that danger lurks in complacency. But I can tell you one thing for certain: it looks a lot better than the road that got me here.

Anonymous

A deep, natural flow of love and care

I came in drunk. Drunk and powerless over alcohol.

“I have not hit rock bottom.”

“No one else knows I am drunk.”

“I can have one more.”

“I can work better than others even when drunk.”

Or so I thought.

I had tried AA out of desperation on an online course. Online because I was even ashamed to acknowledge to myself that I was an alcoholic, so a “public” admission would hit me hard. The course did not work for me though. I dismissed it as “all about God” and “there are 12 steps!”

Surely, I thought, I can go back to my willpower and stop - that is only one step. My willpower works on everything, you know.

Coming to the rooms has been the most life-changing experience of my life. The changes swept through my body, my mind and then my soul. Sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly. They still do. The first step was powerlessness over alcohol; I was already in.

Then, I discovered a new meaning of unmanageability: my life was deteriorating fast and I had no control over it. I knew I would hit rock bottom and I was solely responsible for it. The second step was about God, but God as we

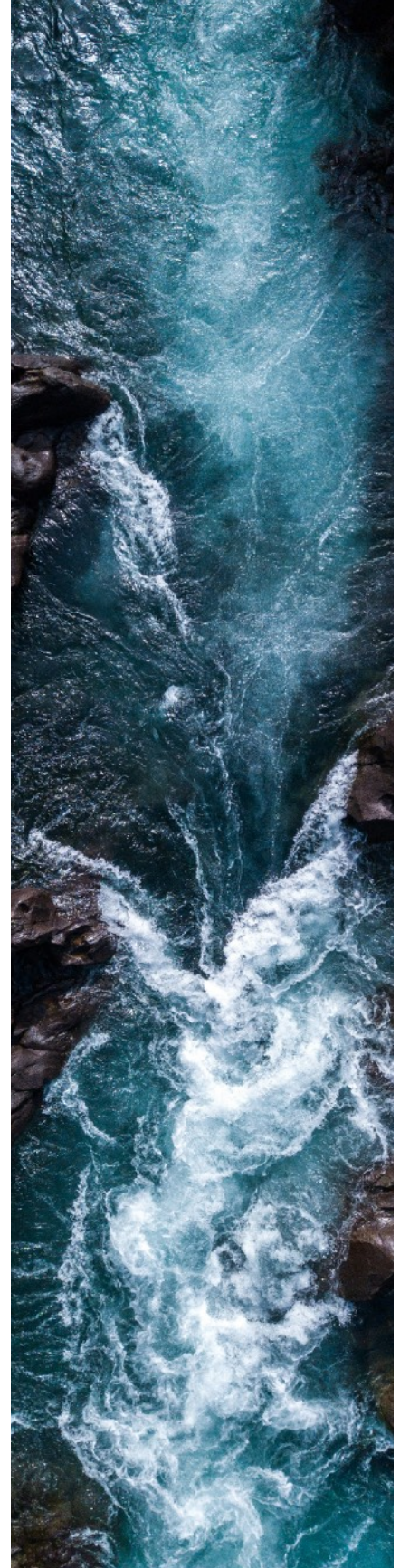
understood him. Any form, any being, any religion, anything really, as long I was willing. So, I started with a belief in a higher power, without a picture or a name. The next day, I woke up sober and I did not WANT to drink.

Sobriety came, but the sadness and the resentment lingered. I quietly heard the shares from fellows, amazed by how easily they talked about their most vulnerable and ridiculous moments. All the while I felt a deep, natural flow of love and care from them. I had never experienced that before.

The fourth step was difficult: after all, I thought, I had been the victim so had not done anything wrong. And then the ninth step “surely needed an exception” so I did not have to make amends to the person who had hurt me the most. Once again, it all came together, one day at a time, as long as I was willing to try, as my beautiful sponsor gently reminded me.

Today, I have shared more in the rooms than I ever have in my entire life. I have found more peace than I ever thought possible, I am happier than I have ever been. Things are not perfect all the time, but I know it will be good. Because Thy will, not mine, be done.

Anonymous



My father ruined alcoholism for me

My father's alcoholism ruined alcoholism for me. As a nine-year old kid, I swore to myself that I would never drink. I held that for a while but, at 18 years old, picked up my first drink. From that first drink I always checked if I was an alcoholic, and used all sorts of excuses to convince myself that I wasn't (like my father).

At the age of 33, I couldn't deny that I couldn't control it when I wanted to control it.

So my first AA visit was to learn how to control my alcohol. Even in the first meeting, I became convinced that there is no control over this thing. Stop or don't stop.

It took me two more years of slips before getting the program. Today I'm six years sober.

My father lives alone, old and self-pitying. I love him but he won't let himself be loved.

I have a family, home and work. I have sponsees that I sponsor. I am really grateful to be one of the few who found the AA door and the way out of alcoholism!

In a way, I'm grateful my father ruined alcoholism for me. I could have gone on forever as a "heavy drinker," where I thought I was functional and could stop when I needed to. But as soon as I realised I was having a problem with alcohol, like my father, I knew I didn't want to be where I was. It sucked immediately. I really thank dad for ruining alcoholism for me.

Anonymous

