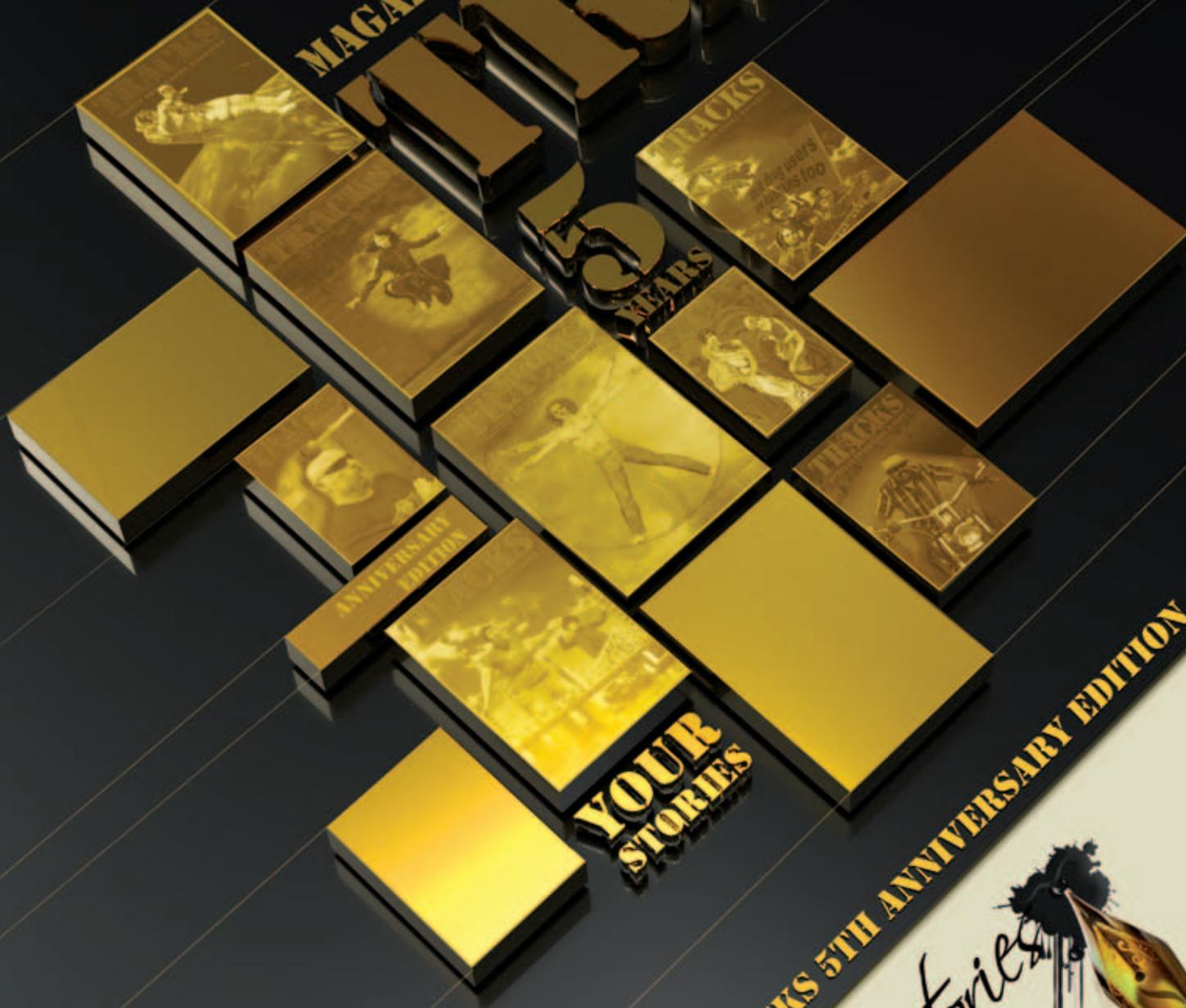


MAGAZINE FOR ILLICIT DRUG USERS

DIRT BAGS



SPECIAL TRACKS 5TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

User stories



**Tracks Magazine For Illicit
Drug Users
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QuIHN'S VISION

An affirming holistic response to the health and well being of illicit drug users in Queensland.

QuIHN's PURPOSE

Identify, articulate and respond to the health needs and well being of illicit drug users by challenging perceptions relating to illicit drug use, providing client services statewide, and by linking, partnering, and connecting with individuals, families, communities, business and government.

Counselling services

provide a range of strategies for people wanting to reduce or cease their drug use, including psychosocial education, and process and recreational groups offering support for people contemplating, making, or sustaining changes to drug use.

Training and education are provided to clients, professionals and the wider community in regard to illicit drug use, through peer education, outreach, group education and staff training. Information and resources are provided through QuIHN's website, brochures, magazines and NSPs. QuIHN is the Queensland member organisation of the Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug User's League (AIVL).

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!

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Welcome to our ninth edition of the Tracks Magazine for Illicit Drug Users. This ninth edition is a special 'bumper-platinum' issue. The theme for this issue is a celebration and tribute to the creativity and collective strength among illicit drug users. The main cause for celebration is the fifth anniversary of the magazine. Equally important it is also the fifth anniversary of Queensland Injectors Health Network (QuIHN) Ltd. This issue includes compilations of the best user stories published in Tracks over the last five years. An Editorial Committee of three individuals was tasked with selecting the best user stories from the many published over the years. The stories selected had to demonstrate at least one of the following criteria: stories that contained reflections that celebrate the resilience of drug users, their success and their achievements; stories that demonstrated the collective identify of illicit drug users; and/or stories that reflected the history of QuIHN and community mobilization in relation to illicit drug use issues. It was a difficult and daunting task for the editorial committee due to the sheer number of articles to select from and the fact that every user story published in the magazine over the years reflected uniqueness, passion, and were all generally excellent narratives. Those that were not included into this anniversary edition of Tracks Magazine were equally as good as those published in this edition and we are sad that we could not include all of the user stories from the years. In closing, we hope you enjoy this edition of Tracks Magazine. We hope this edition encourages readers to heighten awareness of continuity with the past which goes on into the future, and to acknowledge the contributions of our predecessors while looking into the future in a positive and passionate way.

On behalf of all of QuIHN LTD

Regards
Geoff Manu
General Manager



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A Beacon in the Darkness

Ironically, I was introduced to speed at a rehabilitation centre to “fix the dexamphetamine problem”. “Maybe you’ll like the gear better?” a young man of 27 pointed out. I nodded enthusiastically and was on my way.



rowing up, I was just an average little girl - I loved reading, and was “too sensitive” - that’s all I knew about me.

Twoyears ago, I was a scared person who forgot all that she ever was. Money was my self-limiting factor to achieve my goals. My goals - I should say goal - was singular - drugs, specifically, intravenous speed. Where I could I’d inject several times per day. I lost sense of what was important to me in order to feed my habit - with stealing, even prostitution becoming acceptable ways to achieve what the drugs could do for me - get rid of the pain.

After getting my first long-term job after I finished university, at which time I had never abused anything before, I lost it 3 months later, “for making too many silly mistakes”, stamped “ADHD” and left the psychiatrist’s office with dexamphetamine sulfate - a highly addictive stimulant designed to help me concentrate.

It was my “miracle drug” at first but with emotional problems along with attentional

ones, it rapidly became my panacea to solve all problems. Particularly the “being too sensitive” problem. Someone hurt my feelings? Easily fixed. Couldn’t find work? Didn’t matter. I was losing touch with my very real friends? hmm maybe I could live without them. NOT.

I discovered QuiHN by chance. QuiHN stands for “Queensland Injectors’ Health Network”. It is a not-for-profit organisation that offers holistic, accepting support to addicts of all kinds through counselling, advocacy to other support, and other programs that help - I’ve mentioned a few below.

I have been coming to QuiHN for about 2 years now. In the past year I’ve used speed probably 6 times, usually if I’m offered it, and have enough money, but I no longer crave wanting a needle in my arm. Now I am still having issues with my original dexamphetamine problem, but through the help I’ve received as I’ve alluded to below, I have a beacon that I feel is guiding me out of my dark tunnel. The glass is half full now. When I first came to QuiHN, there was no water in my glass at all!

I think the self-awareness I have gained facilitated through the wonderful counsellors at QuiHN have helped me the most, such as knowing my strengths and using them to overcome my weaknesses, and most importantly identifying my values, because when I have re-discovered what I value it brings me an intrinsic joy that can be better than the high from drugs.

*“I’m unlearning
a lot of things
that weren’t
necessarily true.”*

The counsellors at QuIHN are truly the most accepting, insightful, non-judgmental and intelligent people I know. The acceptance was one of the most important things for me. There’s a lot of stigma surrounding the “so called kind of people” who abuse drugs. Anyone can become an addict. Anyone.

Once the acceptance was there, I learned to accept, forgive and even value myself, and this is the process I am still in the painful process of learning.

I’m becoming in touch with the person who was always there, but had lost touch with. I want to tell readers that counselling really help one to “know thyself”.

There’s also social outlets, for example Women’s Circle. There’s a great group called MAISE which helps people with dual diagnosis issues (i.e. mental health conditions associated with drug addiction). And another great group called MUDMAPS - there’s a highly pertinent, extremely useful topic and you can always apply it to your real life!

2 years later, I am embarking on a course at university, psychology, and though unsure of whether I’m ready for it I’ve got my passion back.

Most importantly, I’m healing my shame. I’ve made mistakes, but I’m still a loveable human being. QuIHN offers unconditional acceptance of people.. and always make you feel welcome. They’re always there for you. And they can help

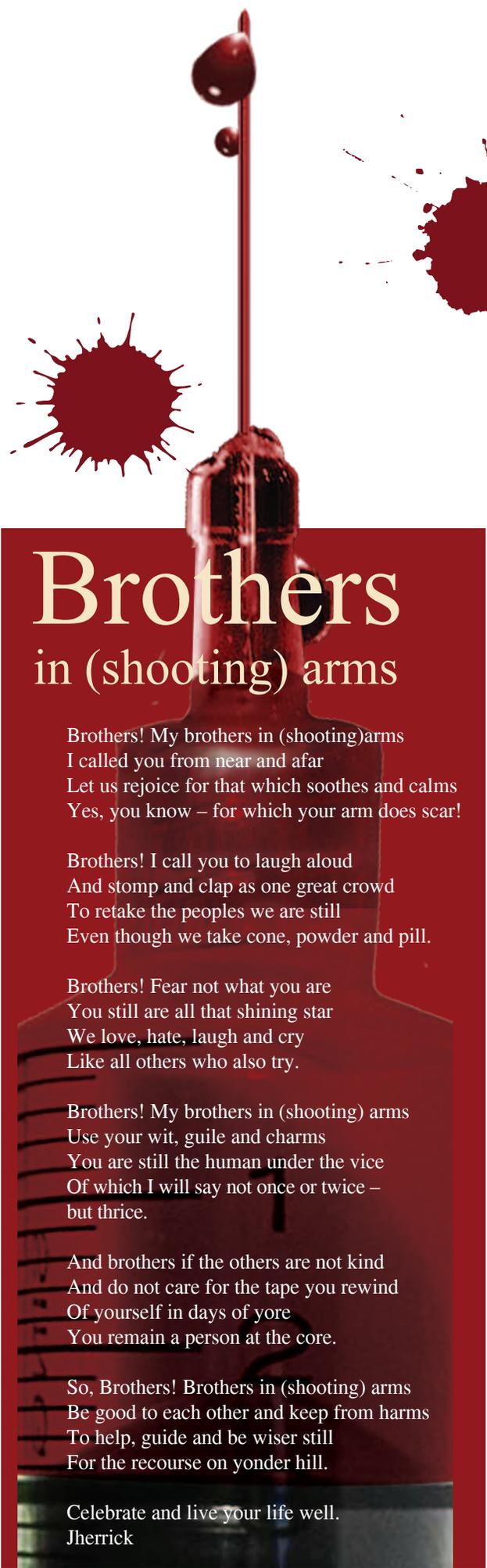
facilitate the use of the many tools that are given to you to help you overcome your addictions.

I want to say thank you, mostly to Caroline, a truly remarkable individual and a beacon in the darkness, who has been my counsellor the majority of the time I’ve been going to QuiHN, and to my new counsellor, Chris, whose just as remarkable and whom I’m getting to know. And to everyone at QuIHN for that matter - everyone there has the most welcoming and most accepting nature. I always feel I can be myself at QuIHN.

I haven’t stopped using drugs, but I know I’m going to. I estimate I’m about 3/4 of the way down my dark tunnel. But I can see the light.

*Everyone has a light at the
end of their tunnel.
And it comes from
within.*

Life



Brothers in (shooting) arms

Brothers! My brothers in (shooting)arms
I called you from near and afar
Let us rejoice for that which soothes and calms
Yes, you know – for which your arm does scar!

Brothers! I call you to laugh aloud
And stomp and clap as one great crowd
To retake the peoples we are still
Even though we take cone, powder and pill.

Brothers! Fear not what you are
You still are all that shining star
We love, hate, laugh and cry
Like all others who also try.

Brothers! My brothers in (shooting) arms
Use your wit, guile and charms
You are still the human under the vice
Of which I will say not once or twice –
but thrice.

And brothers if the others are not kind
And do not care for the tape you rewind
Of yourself in days of yore
You remain a person at the core.

So, Brothers! Brothers in (shooting) arms
Be good to each other and keep from harms
To help, guide and be wiser still
For the recourse on yonder hill.

Celebrate and live your life well.
Jherrick

I worked in the city, so I was only a cheap cab ride from the action. It was the same drill every day; get up, shower, start work at noon for eight hours, then shower, change and go out. We'd meet up at Edwards, our favourite bar, for a few beers and pool until about eleven, then head off to The Planet where a mate gave us half-price entry.

THE PLANET AND MEDUSA'S WELL

Once at The Planet, we'd lose ourselves in the latest house tracks, the line for the bar, or the toilet queue. Drinking had finished by this time, and we sipped water filled from the taps in the bathroom out of designer brand water bottles. After I'd been going to The Planet for a couple of months, it closed for refurbishments so we started going to Medusa's Well, which had good music but was darker, rougher and smellier. The smell was due to the fact that it was a known amphetamine spot. The frenzied dancing combined with poor ventilation meant that there was a permanent remnant of body odour in the air. In fact the club was more often called Medusa's Smell or just The Smell.

TWICE THE SPEED OF LIGHT

On my first night at Medusa's, a guy offered me a snort of speed. On my third night there I accepted. We went into the toilets, and used a five-dollar note on top of the porcelain cistern to suck up the powder. For the first few seconds all I felt was a blocked nose, and then a horrible taste. Then it felt like the world around me expanded and I was being jettisoned through colour and sound at twice the normal speed of light. I felt invincible. After my first taste I used every night for the next week. At first, Joe was my contact; he'd meet us at

in the fast lane

In 1992 I went clubbing five nights a week, slept a total of five hours a day, and managed to hold down a job with a certain burger chain. Wearing tight navy polyester and asking ‘would you like fries with that?’ certainly wasn’t the highlight of my social existence, but it gave me enough money to go out every night.

Medusa’s and we would go straight to the toilets for a sniff. After a while he’d meet up with us at Edwards, and we’d head to Medusa’s together. The progression from using only at night to during the day passed without me even noticing it. I felt fabulous. Work had promoted me to duty manager due to my hard work and fastidious cleaning habits. If I saw even a speck of dirt anywhere in the entire restaurant I’d be out with the scrubbing brush and disinfectant. At home I would bake cakes, clean and do the washing without being asked — mum thought this was a miracle compared to the lazy lay-about I used to be. I started using needles, because it seemed I got more out of my speed that way. By now I was spending the majority of my pay on powder, so getting maximum effect was an issue.

SPEED PSYCHOSIS

I knew something was not right one day at work when I found myself pulling apart the soft-serve machine hunting for the voices that were talking about me. I emptied the ice-cream all over the floor while shouting threats at the voices to make them stop. I got sent home and given a week off work, so I spent the next few days at home freaking out my family. I thought there were cameras everywhere, and that the whole world was trying to spy on me. When Mum came into my room and I had turned all my posters face to the wall, she called a psychiatric hospital. I was bundled off, kicking and screaming, into the back of Mum’s station wagon, and off to the psych ward for an assessment.

I told the doctor that I was using speed, and she told me I had speed psychosis. I was pretty freaked out and paranoid, but I was relieved when she suggested we try detox. Mum couldn’t believe that they were sending me back out into the world when I obviously needed help; she spent the rest of that day and

the next trying to find a detox that would take me. Meanwhile I was still taking speed.

DETOX

Four days after the ice-cream incident Mum got in contact with QuIVAA [now QuIHN - Ed.], and was told there was no amphetamine specific detox beds in Queensland, and that the chances were she would have to try and manage with me at home. They kept her on the phone for nearly an hour, telling her what to expect and what to do, as well as giving her the number for other detox services, which although not speed-oriented, might still be able to squeeze me in. Mum tried every number she’d been given, but was told over and over again that either they didn’t do speed detox, or that there was a waiting list on beds. I don’t know how we made it through the next week. Mum completely turned the house upside down and found my remaining half gram, as well as my fits. She emptied the powder in the loo, and put the needles in their bin and then into the car, ready to return to a Needle and Syringe Program.

Our local doctor visited several times throughout the week, giving mum medication to give me. I don’t remember much about the whole thing, but mum loves reminding me of the whole experience now!

She also talks about how hard it was, when she didn’t know anything about speed or its effects, to try and get me into a detox, or to understand what was going on. I still can’t believe that she put up with me screaming, crying and being a general paranoid because there was nowhere for me to go.

I haven’t used speed since that time, but I was thinking about it the other day when an old house track I used to love was on the radio. I thought about how lucky I was that I didn’t contract hepatitis C or HIV, and lucky that I managed to stop when I did.

- Craig



DROPPED

“Greg! You okay, mate?” says the dealer, “Someone call the ambulance quick!”

George starts mouth-to-mouth on him while Jules calls the ambulance on my mobile phone. “What’s the address here?” she says.

“Fuck no”, says his ex, who we scored with this morning. She’s afraid that she will get raided.

“He’s fucking blue, he’s dead, man! We don’t have time for this crap” he says between breaths into GB’s mouth. Robbo, her boyfriend, continues with beating at his heart. “We can carry him down the stairs mate; there are two of us.”

“Jesus, get the fit out of his arm first, for Christ’s sake.” “Dump him on the corner, I don’t think he’s going to make it this time,” says the paranoid ex. She screams at him, “Get him the fuck out of here; fucking bastard”.

I look on in horror, this is my partner, the father of the child growing in my stomach and he’s dead. I can’t even speak, I can’t move, until I see that any chance he has is slowly slipping away...

“Fuck off and leave him alone bitch,” I say as she goes to hit him.

She continues on with her litany to get him the fuck out of there, she is so worried about herself; it doesn’t even occur to her that this is a human being and he’s dying, she has completely lost her humanity. Jules gives them the street corner as the address, saying he is lying on the footpath.

“He’s breathing,” says the dealer who has been doing

the mouth-to-mouth while Rob pounds on his chest to get his heart moving.

“C’mon Rob, let’s carry him downstairs quick before the Ambo’s get here.”

They thunk him down the stairs, he hits his head several times, no one seems to care, they just don’t want to get busted. I go with them and they all run away – they don’t want to be there when the ambos come. They come and I give them a false name and they ask what he was using. I don’t know what it was today, but George wanders by and overhears and comes forward and says “looks like hammer to me matey”. They hit him with the Narcane.

Narcane is an inhibitor and he is immediately not only awake, but cold stone sober and hanging out – that means he feels like shit and is about to vomit and shit his pants, it’s not good. The ambo’s wanted to take him in to hospital, but he refuses, we jump in the car and drive away.

“We got to go back out and score” he says. I cried a lot of tears that day, because my baby’s Daddy is a junkie, but he is booked into detox, and it will only be a few more weeks until he will be straight and we can have a normal life together.

If he makes it that far...

We encourage all readers to take overdoses seriously - read up on first aid (see our last issue). Remember to not panic, and call the ambulance every time. They don't call the police unless they think they are in danger themselves from violence. - Ed.



CROSSROADS

*In the mirror reflects a stranger,
Strangely this stranger has my name
Eyes judge me, I feel anger
Too far down to see for change
Deception, paranoia, false friends
Inside in pain*

*Frustration, accusations
Innocent yet blamed
More wrongs than rights before me
I cannot see ahead what is to gain
I stand here, still alone and haunted
By my past, the drugs, the pain,*

*The one's to love and trust me
My lies, had forced away
The coldness of that memory
Of the day they turned away,
I now live in the darkness
The cold, the wind, the rain*

*I live alone, the earths my shelter
Down a street that has no name
With a decision laid before me now
Give up, Or choose to change
I prayed for an angel to light my darkness
Touch my heart and heal my pain*

*I prayed for someone to understand me
Have open ears for the words I say
I prayed for trust, respect, forgiveness
Just one person who will stay
I prayed a stranger's eyes to seek and find me
I am here, show me the way*

*So did light shine to my darkness,
Did I feel my heart and heal my pain,
Did a stranger stop and smile,
Not turn and walk away,
Did that angel seek and find me,
Deep inside could I be saved,*

*If I died, was I remembered,
Did someone know my name,
NO, but in true fear of being forgotten
I found my strength to want to change*



One Bloke's scrap with hepatitis C

Living with

I was first diagnosed Hep C positive in 1992 by a country doctor, who'd just told my partner we were having our first child. He then told me that with hepatitis I had maybe five or ten years to go! Well fuck me — what a give and take situation. My first thought was you play the game and it finally catches up with you big time. At the time, the information just wasn't available. No one really knew how this disease would progress. After the initial shock, I decided to take things as they came. I felt alright after breaking a ten year habit, having just moved to the country from the big smoke for obvious reasons. As the GP couldn't tell me anything, the Hep C thing just sort of went into the backburner in my mind as fatherhood and other life stuff took hold.

DEATH SENTENCE!?

I started to have the regular blood tests the doctor was pushing me to have, and new information gradually suggested it wasn't definitely a death sentence. I was enjoying life for the first time in years. No monkey on my back, the new child and being accepted into the community as a young family man. A different life from running around the streets of Sydney, doing what I knew was a dead end and self-destructive behaviour. But I did start to drink more alcohol as in the country areas it is a common social ice breaker. Being a muso too, I was surrounded by the stuff. As the years rolled along, my drinking increased but I reckoned it was an acceptable level. It slowly crept up on me — feeling flat after social occasions, not happy with the family, mood swings, so I started self-medicating with alcohol to get me through the dead days.

DANCE WITH THE BOTTLE

There was always this dark undertow inside my own head, and moods that came from nowhere with no rhyme or reason. The doctor told me my ALT (enzyme) levels were elevated, and asked how much I was drinking, but I didn't tell him the truth. Meanwhile, my moods and drinking were

going out of control — avoiding going out, crying over stupid things and getting depressed. I hid a lot from my partner and started sly-grogging. I knew I was starting another merry-go-round with bringing up past events, disappointments, what-ifs and losing friends to drugs. What I didn't know was that Hep C was part of the picture and that much of this came from having a sick liver. Heavy drinking can damage a healthy liver, but with Hep C my liver found it almost impossible to get waste products out of my body. It was only later I realised that the liver makes the good enzymes that keep your mind and body in balance.

In the meantime, I was so down and out of control that my ability to make sound judgements flew out the window. My partner tried to help but I pushed her so far away she had to take our child and leave. I tried counselling but the mood swings were doing me in and alcohol was a solace. My energy levels dropped and I wound up living in a black hole of my own making.

ON THE MEND

When I realised Hep C was involved, my first step was to tackle the binge drinking. A counsellor helped me to work out the things that got me down and made me drink. Once I stabilised a bit, I went to work on my health to help my liver stop poisoning my body and head. Eating right, plenty of vegetables, cutting down on fat, exercising. Avoiding stressful situations, taking time-outs, eating nutritious snacks instead of large meals. My energy levels were on the rise and I started feeling good about achievements on a day-to-day basis, looking forward and not backwards. Fuck, it wasn't easy and it all depends on how much damage you've done, but even with cirrhosis (death of liver tissue) there is still hope.

TREATMENT

I also learned of the great new treatments that can totally eradicate the disease from your body. Combination anti-viral therapy uses a number of

the Devil

medications together to fight the Hep C virus. The treatment is a combination of injections and tablets — the injections are called Interferon and the tablets are called Ribavirin.

Your doctor works out the best treatment, which can last from six to twelve months. There are side effects, and you'll need to think about how the treatment will affect you, your family and lifestyle.

There are many different strains (genotypes) of the hepatitis C virus. Before you begin treatment, your doctor will ask you to have some blood tests, one of them will test what type of genotype you have. The length of time you are on treatment and the decision to start will depend on your genotype.

Once you have finished treatment you will be asked to attend the clinic for regular check - ups. This will enable your doctor to monitor your health. This is especially important if you do not respond to the treatment.

DECISIONS

For me, it was a case of hanging in there with my doctor and making the ultimate decision to want to change my lifestyle, for me and not others. It wasn't easy because it's human to get hard wired into negative ways of reacting and behaving in different situations. It did help to know the depression came from the virus attacking my liver, and that there were a lot of support groups out there. The guys at the Hepatitis C Council were wonderful professionals who pointed me in the right direction and answered all the questions I had.

So if you've got Hep C, don't suffer in silence. If you reach out you'll find there's someone to help and give that hand up. Stay strong, stay cool and don't fall into that black hole! All the best. - P

HOW TO AVOID THE VIRUS

Never re-use or share needles and injecting equipment. Don't share personal hygiene equipment like razors or toothbrushes. Never share tattooing or piercing equipment. Better yet, go to a professional for your body art!

Transmission through sexual contact is uncommon, but can occur when blood exposure is possible.

Condoms and lubricant are recommended for anyone with a new sexual partner, anal sex, if a partner is menstruating.

Hepatitis C is one of the most serious types of hepatitis, an inflammation of the liver. After the acute infection, about 70% of people do not get rid of the virus from their body, and it can be passed on to others. It can cause liver disease, cirrhosis and liver cancer.

TREATMENT

A combination of ribavirin and a Pegylated interferon is the current treatment for HCV. Studies show that after 24 to 48 weeks of combination treatment, some people can get rid of HCV. Even if the treatment doesn't wipe out the virus, it can sometimes improve the condition of the liver. Some of the more common side effects of treatment might include flu-like symptoms, nausea, diarrhoea, dry skin, hair loss and depression.



eternity

My mate introduced me to Narcotics Anonymous, or NA, about seven years ago. He was a very intelligent and complex man who had battled with addiction for all his life.

We shared a flat together after we came out of detox many years ago. We had a lot of similarities, but he was always brighter, smarter and more plagued with self doubt and a brooding melancholy that never went away. He was best man at my wedding, and when I had the pre-wedding jitters he was there at 2 am listening to me and bolstering me up. He gave of himself selflessly.

I took to NA like a duck to water — I guess I was so far down that I had no where else to go — but it's not that easy for everyone. Some people just can't surrender to a higher power, can't let go, are always torn by doubt. He

was one of life's tortured souls, but he always wanted and longed to be clean. And that's what being a member of NA is all about — wanting earnestly to be clean and working towards it. Go figure, he introduced me to NA and I got all the anniversaries.

Over the years we lost touch, but I would see him periodically at meetings and renew my acquaintance. There were periods where he was clean, and periods I am sure he was using. It wasn't my place to judge him, but we had shared something special together, and I always felt like he had given me life when no one else cared.

LORD IT'S HARD TO BE HUMBLE

I hadn't seen him for years. I had moved away and we didn't attend the same meetings anymore. I was involved

eternity

in my life and was a pretty holier-than-thou toadie – I had succeeded (in my own mind) with my addiction problems, was married, had a car, mortgage, kids and I was smug and self assured. I kept going to NA but I thought of myself as the shining example for younger and less time-up members to admire. I had been clean for 12 years and I was fucking complacent. I no longer thought of myself as an addict.

Big mistake. Big fucking mistake. I injured myself at work — nothing terribly life threatening — but the doctor gave me pain meds. I told my group and my sponsor, and was at first very careful, the model of propriety and took my meds – late if anything, hours later than I needed to. Then one day I took two for absolutely no reason. That's all it took. I was doctor shopping and back on the band wagon. I would go to meetings loaded and tell everyone how wonderful I was. I treated my wife and kids like crap and I lost my job. Then I ran into my friend, and he looked at my pinned eyes and my thin frame and he had that knowing look in his eyes, and he took me to our old meeting just for old time's sake. Here I was thinking I had them all fooled, but the only fool was me. And I stood up in front of everyone and told them I had thought I was cured, but I was worse than ever and could they help me. Straight back to step one after 12 years, and I had done it myself by forgetting who I was. I am an addict. I wept like a baby, my mate took me to my doctors and we rang the DDU together and I booked into detox.

This time I went back to NA with humility and without my blinkers on. I apologised to my fellow NA members for my contempt for them, for my dispicable attitude and my bigotry and conceit. It took a long time to feel like I was worthy of those fine folks, and through it all no one judged me, which only made me more miserable. But this time I was determined to put my faith in God and surrendered my will completely.

CHANGE IN ATTITUDE

The steps were much harder, I had taken the whole

process for granted. I was truly humbled and humiliated. I renewed my commitment to NA and to God, and got on with my life, once again losing touch with my mate. Went back to work, reconciled with my wife and everything went back to business as usual as if I had never relapsed at all, except I now knew I was truly an addict and how fine a line I truly walked.

Then one day his wife called and told me my mate had died. Twice this man had saved my life and brought me to NA, and what had I ever done for him? How often had I given anything of myself to anyone ever? I took another long hard inventory and I wasn't at all happy with who I was. My attitude hadn't realistically changed much — it was all about me — and I'd missed the entire point of NA, to give it back. These days I truly try to be understanding, non-judgmental and to be as much help to others that I can, not only in NA, but in my life.

TWO STRIKES NOT OUT

God and my Guardian Angel had given me two strikes, I wasn't about to fail them after everything they had done. I can still go to work and support my family and fit into my schedule the time to pick someone up and take them to meetings, to sponsor new members and to be available 24 hours a day for my brothers, because I was now, after 20 years, ready to give it back.

It doesn't happen easily – the self growth and such you go through need constant re-evaluation. There are always going to be opportunities to use, it takes as much effort and commitment to stay clean as it ever did to use. I still walk the fine line, still know how vulnerable I am, but I have something wonderful that I would share with you – that is NA and my brothers and sisters in the program who have made me who I am today.
third chance at life

I don't care if you come to meetings loaded, been there and worn that t-shirt. Just as long as you understand that there is hope and there is life after drugs, come back as many times as you want until you too are ready to try a life without junk. I am an addict and I am in recovery

continued

eternity

and I thank God and my good friend and guardian angel and NA and the wonderful people within it for giving me a third chance at life. It was far more than I deserve.

Last week we laid an eternity medal on my friend's grave. I wept openly. He deserved so much more out of life. He died of AIDS. There but for the grace of God go I.

FEAR IS YOUR FRIEND

When I was in my early twenties, I was very career focused. It seemed there was nothing I couldn't do – I was fearless. There was no challenge too great. It was this fearlessness that introduced me to heroin. Sure, I had taken other drugs recreationally – smoked pot, taken the odd E and speed, so heroin was just another experience waiting to be experienced.

This fearlessness had served me well. I was 25, living in Sydney, announcing at Triple J at night, and working as a production assistant in current affairs in the day. This was quite an achievement for someone who hadn't even finished Year 10 at high school, and who had just decided on a whim that I was going to work in radio. And it was a whim too. I never really knew what it was I wanted to do, and still don't. Radio just seemed like a good idea at the time. I had all the qualifications; I could talk, was overly confident, had a sense of humour and was in the right place at the right time. That's probably why I had to sabotage it all. It had all come too easy.

Although nobody spoke about it openly, drugs were widely accepted in the industry. The network news director was in rehab for cocaine addiction, on full pay. The announcer who was on the shift before mine was literally physically taken off air one night as he was babbling uncontrollably in an amphetamine blur. So my heroin addiction was barely even noticed.

At the time I thought it was fun; you know, "rock n roll", a dabble on the dark side. I felt life was too boring and predictable, and needed spicing up. My goal was to shoot up in every toilet at the ABC if possible. It became a game. Towards the end, I was even shooting up in the on-air studio whilst on-air! The last shift I ever did I was absolutely smashed. I had organised a friend to go and score and then bring it into the studio. We had a taste while a music track was playing and got extremely stoned. I had to shake my friend awake every time I wanted to do a mike break as he was nodding off and snoring very loudly. Eventually I nodded off too and woke up to "dead air" that had apparently gone on for so long that the guys in the master control room (the room at the ABC that controls all networks around the country) had switched on the emergency back-up tape that usually only went on when the studio had crashed. Well, it had really, and my Radio career with it.

In the end it was my decision to leave the ABC and return to Brisbane. If I hadn't admitted to my boss that I had a drug problem, and ignored it like everyone else was able to do, I would probably still be there, if I wasn't dead. Only once I asked for help, did it become a real problem for those around me. The stigma of heroin was too great for them, and the sooner I was gone the better.

Now, I'm living back in Brisbane and I'm on the buprenorphine program. Things aren't as exciting as they once were and I'm not as fearless as I used to be. But I'm learning to deal with those fears one day at a time. And my next career move? I think I might go into politics... I've got all the qualifications.

FIGHTING NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES

"All the injecting drug users I know are incredibly creative and articulate people full of overlooked talent. I wish people could get

While Tracks neither condemns nor condones illicit drug use, we are aware of the terrible stigma and negativity surrounding illicit drugs that users have to deal with. We invite readers to send in stories of positive drug experiences and how they deal with this negativity that society tries to project on to them. - Editor

over the stigma and see them with fresh eyes...”
 “D. loves her drugs but she loves her kids even more. She’d have to be one of the best parents I know and she has this really close friendship with her two kids. She kept her use under control and away from her kids, yet when they hit their teens she was open and honest about her use. It really gives me the shits when your average person thinks drug use means you don’t love your kids or you are automatically a crap parent”.

“I’m part of a support group for people who are using. I’m consistently amazed at the resilience of the people in that group. They’ve been incredibly strong to survive against the odds, often dealing with exploitation, grief and loss, abuse, prejudice or stigma”.

“I’ve always figured we must be a bit different to the norm if we do drugs. And I reckon that’s why we users tend to be more artistic, sensitive to others who don’t fit in, and are good at thinking outside the box. Of course, the big problem is everyone inside that ‘box’ spend a lot of time and energy making you feel like shit for being outside the box! But I guess squares fit in boxes better anyone else, ha!”

I’ve been working with two guys going through detox. Like so many other users, they’ve never got into trouble with the law, and they are really likeable blokes. It’s a bugger that society give them a bad rap, when smokers or heavy drinkers are usually seen as okay people who just happen to have a health issue. People are people, they shouldn’t be judged on the legal status of their particular drug...”

We always hear the stories of how terrible everything is. I don’t believe that everyone has such a massively negative experience with drugs, yet we rarely hear the positive side of it.

We’re constantly bombarded with stories about how terrible drug use is, and presented with exceedingly negative views of people that use drugs. The media always presents us with the worst situations, and leads

people to believe that all drug users experience drug use in that way.

In turn, people that use drugs also tend to relate their negative experiences when they write or speak to the media, because this is the way people see things as being done. If all a person ever hears is negative stories, it is likely to feed into their mind and increase the chance of them having a negative experience.

Not everyone experiences dramatic problems with taking drugs, and people don’t need to. Also, if all that people with no personal experience of drugs hear is negative stories about drug use, they’ll believe it can only be that way, and accordingly they will view people that use drugs negatively, leading to discrimination against all drug users.

Many people who use drugs enjoy them – they are functional, they input meaningful and amazing things to society and I’d like to hear more about people’s positive experiences, their great ideas and the positive things that they’re doing in the various drug user magazines. My brother for instance, like many others, is a great person, but because he’s constantly put down for his drug use he has come to believe that he’s not good at much. He, like many others, is constantly subjected to negative stories from other users, the mainstream media and the rest of his family. He is actually a witty person with plenty of skills. I believe that user magazines should be seeking positive stories of users doing positive things.

I think that we should try to keep negative stories, pictures and poems about drug use out of users zines as were already overwhelmingly surrounded by negativity. I want to finish reading a user magazine feeling positive and inspired, not feeling negative, guilty or scared.

Thanks,
Mango.



From Beginning

I'd recently split up with my girlfriend and was beginning to get back into the swing of going out clubbing again. I was working at the time and doing a bit of coke on the side but pretty much holding things together. One day, this bloke comes round to see me to get a bit and then says, out of the blue "You look like a pinner. You look like you inject". After telling him to fuck off I discovered he had a spare works on him and although it had been three years since I'd used a needle — I'd not often used coke just on its own — it was always speedballs. So, I had a hit and after that, slowly but surely, I got into it — it got me by the scruff of the neck. I was getting superb coke at the time and then along came this batch of mediocre stuff. It was a bit sedimenty but if you'd had a little more patience than greedy bollocks here, you could have mixed it up clear. We all promise to filter but don't always do a good job of it — saying we'll do it better next time round (hoping there will be one). My hygiene routine around injecting was pretty sloppy at the time. After a couple of weeks of good filtering and lazy filtering I started feeling these aches and pains in the top of my arms and my breathing didn't feel quite right. In hindsight I can see that this was the beginning of an attack of endocarditis.

It all came to a head one weekend. On the Friday, after having a 'lazily filtered hit' (may I say it was a good one!) I started to feel rough, like I might have had a dirty hit. I had no painkillers at hand so it was no meds! I went to bed but had a night of broken sleep. I got up to find I still had a bit of coke left, so

what's a man supposed to do? Of course, sit down and filter this one properly! Yes, I still had a few aches and pains but I had to change the way I felt somehow.

At last a good hit! After 30 minutes my body started to talk — no shout — at me; something's wrong sir. Bad hit or worse, this was now becoming a problem. It was self infliction of a class A drug. I needed help, help from a doctor, consultant, but not the morgue! By Sunday morning, I was finding it hard to breathe. I couldn't seem to get a deep breath and my shoulders, thighs and arse were constantly aching. I just couldn't get comfortable.

I had a severe headache — every conceivable type of headache was being played out in my skull — and I don't normally get headaches. My chest really hurt when I took a breath. I had to concentrate on slowing my body right down so I could take slower, shallower breaths.

Next morning I knew something pretty serious was happening. I didn't want to go to hospital; I hoped things weren't that bad and I also didn't want to get told off when I got to Accident and Emergency for something they might see as my own fault — the self-inflicted. But I made the decision: hospital.

I was skint that day; I didn't even have the bus fare to get there, so I had to walk. A long, slow, difficult walk. Once I got there I had x-rays, scans and blood tests. I was finally admitted to ICU after 26 hours curried up on a bench in A&E. I was put on a 24 hour slow release drip — my temperature went up to 107 and everything started to take a hold. It was like a



to endo

bad hit x 5. Pains all over my body, headaches — in a nutshell — feeling seriously shite. I longed for some TLC, sleep, food, an escape from my drugfuelled routine! The doctors came to see me.

The symptoms noted on my assessment form — together with the fact that I was an injector — seemed to give them an idea of what they were looking for. They checked my nails for ‘splinters’ (little dark lines on the nails) and various other symptoms related to endocarditis – fever, headaches, painful limbs, shallow breaths and so on. They told me I had a collapsed pulse, which I found out was related to me having a pulmonary embolism, a blood clot on the lung. This gave me an irregular heart beat. It’s then that you realise this is fucking serious and it’s happening to me. All that was needed was a clot on the brain or heart and there was a good chance of a stroke.

And then they took the piss! Well my piss. Bloods, cultures, tests for hep C and HIV, then I was x-rayed, scanned and had an ultrasound, MRI and EGG. The results showed a vegetation on my tricuspid valve - or Infective Endocarditis. I didn’t know anything about it. Didn’t even know how to spell it. Still don’t! Endo.. End.. Oh, pains in the heart!

By this stage, I was well up for a good night’s sleep. I was dosed up with gentamicin, the domestos of the antibiotic world, (IV 4 times a day for a week)

continued on antibiotics (fluxocillin IV for 4 weeks) and deltaparin, as well as countless painkillers and sleepers. This combined with food x 3 a day and TLC from the nurses, I was content to rest my old body and wait...

After four weeks of pretty much just what the doctor ordered, here I was clean; heart and arms repaired, blood good, as well as 1.5 stone heavier. So you can imagine I was feeling pretty happy and confident. It was nice to wear a t-shirt... The funny thing about having IV treatment is that you end up living by the sword but luckily for me, this time, not dying by it. I do sometimes wonder whether I’ll have any long-term problems, when I read or hear stuff regarding the heart, it now relates to me too, i.e I now have to have preventative antibiotics EVERY time I go to the dentist for treatment or have any type of surgery. For insurance and filling out forms, that niggling question at the end ‘Have you got any heart problems?’ Well yes, I have.

This all happened one year ago, nearly to the day; hospital for Valentines Day! So what am I doing now? Still alive. Have I learned anything? Well, apart from liking my choice of drugs, maybe now I at least change the way I take them. It can be a hard life being into drugs; addict, junkie, user, taker etc. Be aware of the circle, that vicious one. Take care of yourself, be more hygienic and its not always clever to be able to do shit loads of everything. And believe me, what the eye don’t see, the heart can feel.

End o story, Andy.



Peter is a 38 year old male health professional who has survived 2 bouts of cancer in his life and is living with both hepatitis C and HIV infection. He shares his story here, where he experienced both the pressure of discrimination and also support that he has sought out.

Peter's Story

I contracted HIV in 1995 and started treatment immediately. I was scared to tell my partner but I told him anyway. My partner was supportive and stood by me, and the relationship lasted for 3 ½ years. My parents had a negative reaction initially and said “What do you expect with your lifestyle”. They shut me out. Later my parents apologised and expressed their love and willingness to support me. Mum still checks up sometimes but it’s not a big issue anymore. When out one night two people I knew disclosed my HIV status which made my partner furious and a fist fight led on to us being gay bashed by the police. This was in NSW and at the time I went to the Anti Discrimination authorities who said I had no recourse. I was the victim of physical violence and this led to low self esteem and a feeling of vulnerability. When my relationship ended I felt lost, could not cope with the instability I felt and this is when my drug use began. The amphetamines created a false sense of security and the illusion that I wasn’t alone. My career suffered and I changed jobs regularly. It was 1999 and I had entered into what I call my dark decade of self sabotage. In 2001 I was diagnosed with Hep C and this added to me taking on the victim mentality which fuelled my addiction more. My family never knew when

to trust me, they would see glimmers of hope and then be disappointed when I would relapse. I was not wanting to change my life or help myself. In 2002 a lung tumour led to an operation and radiation but I was still using drugs. In 2003 I was let down again by people I thought were friends and professionals, breaking confidentiality after a stranger approached me asking about my HIV status and also my family were informed of my lapse back into drug use. I felt anger and great frustration because of this. I entered rehab in 2004 and then after more drug use, a toxic relationship and a few more dramas, it took until early this year for me to give up the drug use and get my life back on track. I am no longer the cause of worry or anguish for my family. I am back to who I was before, giving back to and serving the community. I now have a good stable job that I love. I am stronger, know myself and will not give people a foothold to discriminate. I am more open and that way people don’t have a chance to speak behind my back. I am happy and accepting as are the people around me. Before I was stoic and always on guard and I have now dropped my defences. I now have valuable relationships, the support of my family and also a good support network, through seeking out the services of both QAHC and QuIHN.

Twelve-stepping tea totalitarians

Captain Serenity had a three month addiction to heroin, then a 12 year treatment of methadone, so he knows it all. He's cured and wants to save you from your evil ways. Step aside Serenity Sisters; Captain Serenity has all the answers in the Big Blue Book!

Honestly he can give some of us, who have come back after a long time absent from our own lives, a bad name. Holier than thou, and somehow more in touch with himself than the common man who has never faced the challenges he has had to face in the past, he has truly triumphed, but do you want him to go on and on about it for the rest of your life?

You know them — “Hi I am Captain Serenity and I am an addict, I used heroin then got put on the methadone program and then I found NA and got in touch with my higher power and never looked back. I go to 75 meetings a week and I have sponsored 700 people, today it's my 16th Birthday and I have been clean a total of 16 years”.

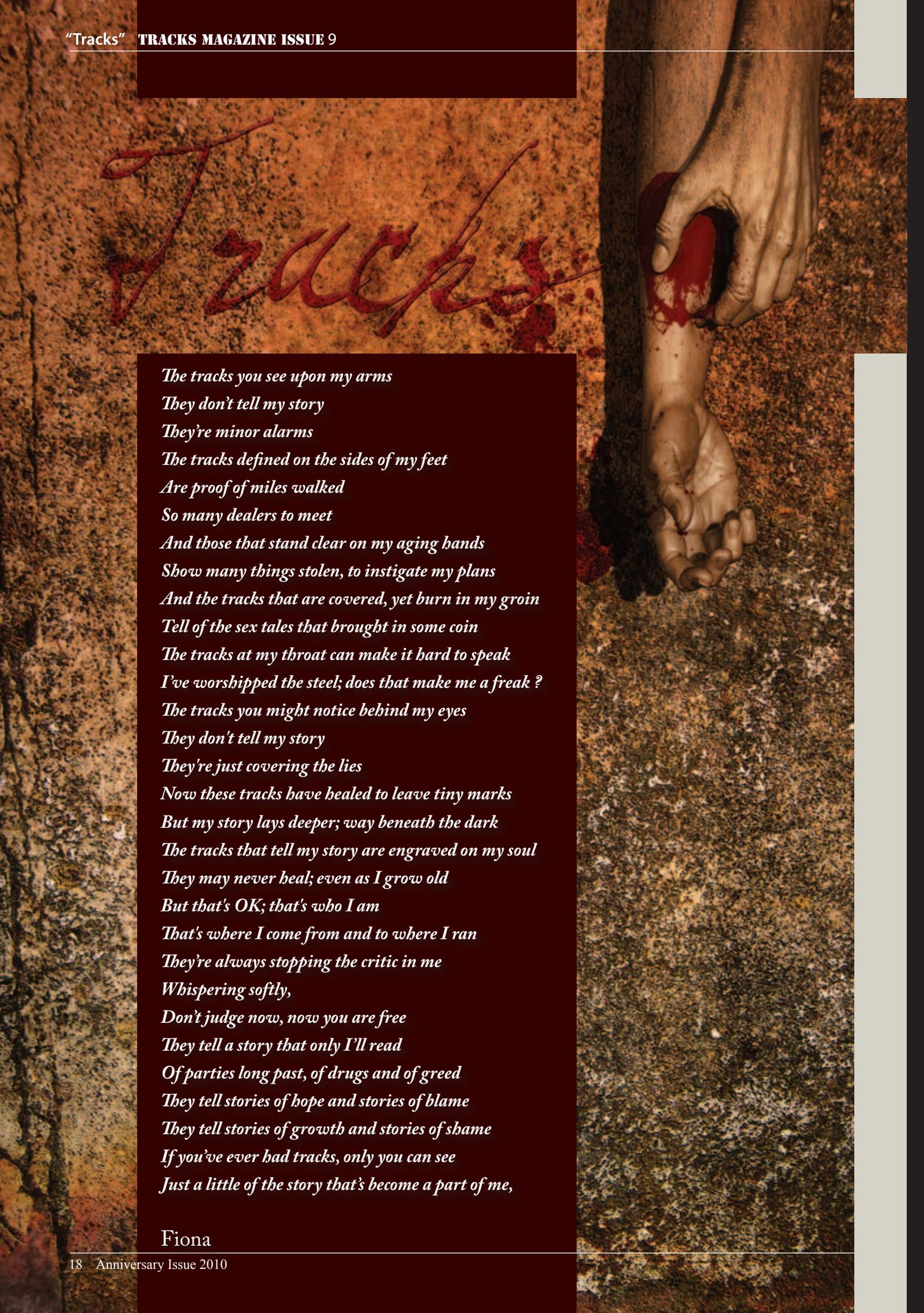
Honestly it's the same with the bible bashers, those who found GOD or something else, or the new age wankers and their cleansing and nurturing and mother earth crap. I don't know what you guys think, but it sounds like a sick codependency to me (aren't new age buzz words fun?).

These guys have replaced what they had — that is an addiction — with an addiction of another type; being in the club, the firm, and feeling in some way superior, because they can do it and the rest of us haven't ever been challenged and won, or have failed in some way because we're still using or trying to come to terms with it all.

They can be quite funny, their functions are full of people offering you advice and making token gestures, and there seems to be this unspoken

hierarchy of who is cleaner than anyone else. Even if your poison is heroin, it's totally unacceptable for you to have a beer with your dad on Xmas day, because you have an addictive personality, and you might develop an addiction to alcohol instead. Yes it has happened before, but do you live your life denying yourself any freedom because you are afraid to live? Personally I think it's a lot easier to get in touch with yourself and find out why and how you became an addict and change those behaviours — it isn't necessary to have 50 people holding your hand, it is only necessary to earnestly want to achieve a goal and to work steadily at it, and to not kick yourself when you fail, but to get back up and try again.

It reminds me of that great movie Fight Club, where one of the characters became addicted to 12 step groups. Lets face it, there is Sex Addicts Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous and every other conceivable type of 12-stepping tea totalitarian group out there, ready to save you from yourselves. But is that really life? I'm not knocking it — yes it is very vital to some people quitting, but it just isn't for me. I've been clean for three years now, I don't see the same people, and I have a full-time job and a family to support. That part of my life is well and truly over. I have mates, who are in the “firm” for various reasons, some for drugs and some for alcohol, and it works for them — maybe it will for you too.

A hand holding a bloody knife against a textured wall. The word "Tracks" is written in blood on the wall. The background is a dark, textured wall with a vertical crack on the left side. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the hand and the blood.

Tracks

*The tracks you see upon my arms
They don't tell my story
They're minor alarms
The tracks defined on the sides of my feet
Are proof of miles walked
So many dealers to meet
And those that stand clear on my aging hands
Show many things stolen, to instigate my plans
And the tracks that are covered, yet burn in my groin
Tell of the sex tales that brought in some coin
The tracks at my throat can make it hard to speak
I've worshipped the steel; does that make me a freak?
The tracks you might notice behind my eyes
They don't tell my story
They're just covering the lies
Now these tracks have healed to leave tiny marks
But my story lays deeper; way beneath the dark
The tracks that tell my story are engraved on my soul
They may never heal; even as I grow old
But that's OK; that's who I am
That's where I come from and to where I ran
They're always stopping the critic in me
Whispering softly,
Don't judge now, now you are free
They tell a story that only I'll read
Of parties long past, of drugs and of greed
They tell stories of hope and stories of blame
They tell stories of growth and stories of shame
If you've ever had tracks, only you can see
Just a little of the story that's become a part of me,*

Fiona

QuIHN Guide to wheel filters

Different filters do different jobs



5.0 micron

good for ecstasy, physeptone, dexamphetamines or other chalky pills



0.8 micron

good for MS contin, oxycontin, buprenorphine (subutex or suboxone)



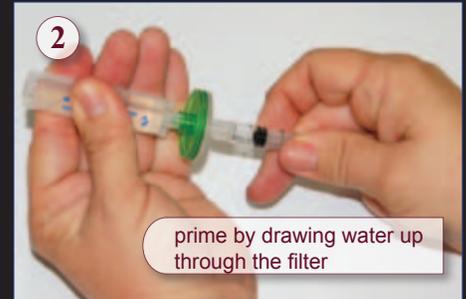
0.2 micron

good for methadone or as a final filter to take out bacteria from any mix. Remember it won't take out hep C, hep B or HIV/AIDS



1

what you will need...



2

prime by drawing water up through the filter



3

chuck away the water



4

squeeze a cotton filter into your mix



5

attach the filter with needle* to the barrel and push down on the cotton filter

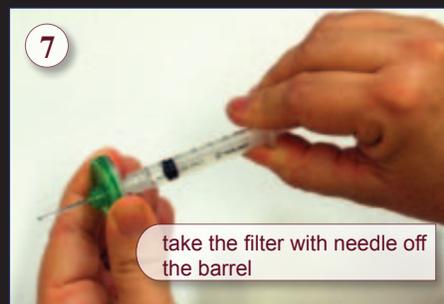


6

with the needle hold the cotton filter in place and draw the mix up into the barrel

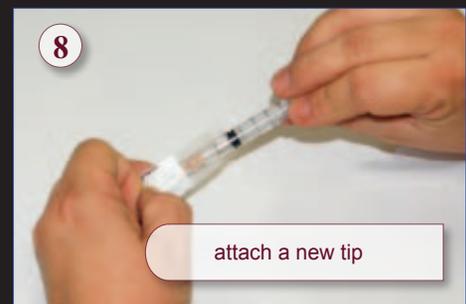
REMEMBER!

Wheel filters are for one use only and should be disposed after you have completed your shot. Always use a Safe Disposal Bin. Make sure you obtain one with your equipment from the Needle Syringe Program.



7

take the filter with needle off the barrel



8

attach a new tip



9

you now have a cleaner shot!

Some important things to remember...

- You won't lose your mix only the chalk and wax
- Don't heat your mix
- Only use the filter once
- Prime filter with water
- Use in one direction only



* depending on the substance being mixed, some users prefer not to use needle for steps 5 through 7. QuIHN recommends that the needle be used as shown.

Healing Our People Everywhere

JULY 2010

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FEBRUARY 2011

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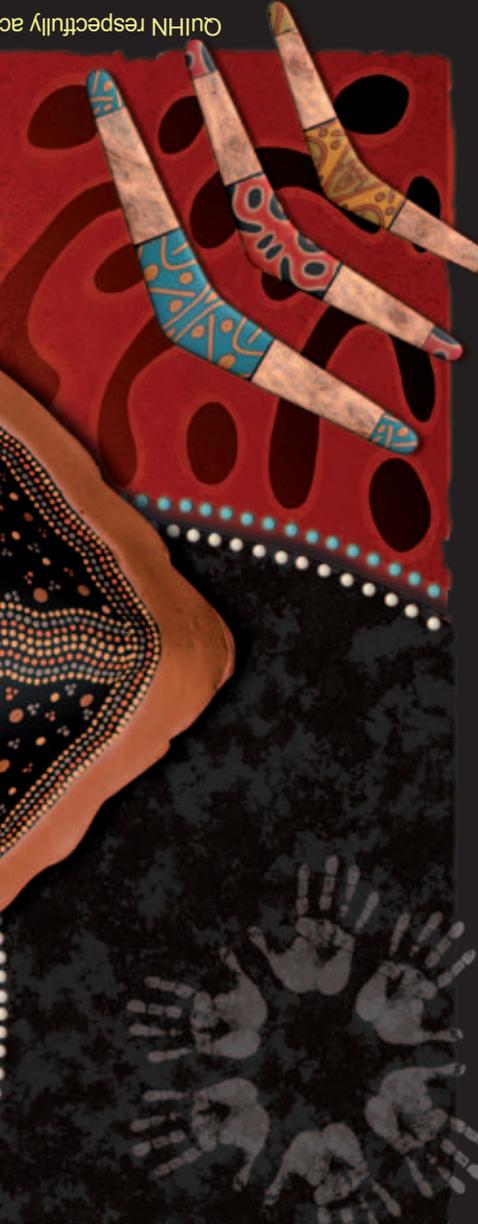
MARCH 2011

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- Courtesy of Indj-N-Arts www.theaboriginalexperience.com.au

acknowledges Traditional owners and Indigenous Elders



Artwork based on Rodney Boschman Designs

Queensland Public and A&TSI Holidays for 2010/11

JULY 2010

1st - Coming of the Light
5th to 12th - NAIDOC Week National Celebrations

AUGUST 2010

4th - National Aboriginal & Islander Children's Day
9th - International Day of the World's Indigenous People
11th - Ekka Day (Brisbane only)

SEPTEMBER 2010

16th to 18th - Torres Strait Cultural Festival

OCTOBER 2010

15th - Deadly Awards

NOVEMBER 2010

11th - Remembrance Day
23rd to 25th - First Contact Sports & Cultural Festival
23rd - National Indigenous Education Conference

DECEMBER 2010

24th - Boxing Day
25th - Christmas Day

OCTOBER 2010

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NOVEMBER 2010

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DECEMBER 2010

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APRIL 2011

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MAY 2011

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JUNE 2011

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JANUARY 2011

1st - New Year's Day
24th January - School Term 1 begins in Qld schools
26th January - Australia Day

FEBRUARY 2011

Boondall Wetlands Festival *
13th - National Apology to the Stolen Generation

MARCH 2011

21st - Harmony Day
25th - National Close the Gap Day

APRIL 2011

22nd April - Good Friday
25th April - Easter Monday
25th April - Anzac Day
28th - Former Origin Greats (FOGS)

MAY 2011

2nd - Labor Day
22nd - Zillmere Multicultural Festival
22th to 6th June - Queensland Week
26th - National Sorry Day
27.5 to 3rd June - National Reconciliation Week

JUNE 2011

3rd - Mabo Day (public holiday in the Torres ONLY)
11th to 14th - The Dreaming Festival *
13th - Queen's Birthday

MIX-UP

**THE MIX UP IS A FUN, FREE
AND CONFIDENTIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM
FOR PEOPLE WHO CURRENTLY INJECT DRUGS**

help to reduce your risk of getting hep C while injecting
hep C
hep C
hep C
hep C
hep C
hep C
hep C

learn how to use wheel filters

maintain healthier veins while injecting
veins
veins
veins

find out more about support services
healthier
healthier
healthier
support
support
support
support

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS,
- OVERDOSE PREVENTION,
- SAFER INJECTING,
- SAFER SEX,
- AND MUCH MORE...



Jane's Story

It was a Tuesday morning when Jane rang me at the drug detox centre that I worked. She told me she was calling from Rockhampton and was very interested in our detox service. Jane explained that a friend from Brisbane had bought a copy of the Scene magazine up with her on a visit. As Jane was flicking through the paper she came across an advertisement on our detox service. She said it had caught her eye and wanted to know more.

Jane had been using heroin for the last three years and felt that it was time she stopped. She went on to say that it was destroying her life – her relationships never lasted more than three months, she was always broke, and she hated waking up every morning feeling like shit and hanging out.

Jane had organised to come to Brisbane and stay with her aunt who knew about her drug taking and her resolve to kick the habit. She was planning on doing her detoxing there with the help of the in-house team and wanted to know more about our services and procedures.

I explained the process to Jane who seemed satisfied that this was just what she was looking for. Rockhampton had no similar options and she was nervous explaining her problem to people there because it was such a close-knit community.

As I was talking to Jane on the phone, I could hear the sound of call-waiting for Jane in the background. Jane said "Bugger them, if it's important they can leave a message, I'm calling long distance". I explained that we had a free 1800 number that country callers could use. She said she'd call back in a couple of days and let us know when she would be down and make an appointment to see us. I offered to send her some information on our detox services to her, but Jane was reluctant on giving her address and said that she would probably be in Brisbane by the time the mail arrived anyway.

That afternoon, Jane rang back in tears and in obvious distress. As she calmed down she explained

that the call she had ignored when she was talking to me that morning had been from a friend she normally scored with.

After hanging up, she had checked her messages. Her friend had just found a new dealer and apparently his stuff was "awesome". Did Jane want to chip in and score? Jane was very honest and said she had called her friend back and did want to have one last good shot before she began her road to recovery. But when Jane rang her friend back there was no answer. So Jane dressed and caught a bus out to her friends place to find her.

She found her slumped at her kitchen table, a pick still in her arm, her face greyish-blue, and after checking for vital signs, Jane found that her friend was gone.

She stayed with her friend till the ambulance arrived. She told me the ambulance driver was an angel – he had comforted her and had given her some names of counselling and Alcohol & Drug services in her area. He encouraged her to seek their support. She went on to tell me about the nightmare that followed when the police arrived and questioned her for over three hours.

Jane said she would be staying in Rockhampton for a little longer – she had a funeral to attend, the police did not want her to leave the area in the immediate future, and she was considering seeking out the local counselling services in the meantime.

I encouraged her to seek the help of medical professionals and told her if she needed any other advice to please call us back. I wished her well in her recovery and told her if she did come down to Brisbane to definitely drop in and see us and to have a talk with our professional staff.

Kevin



FATHER'S DAY

*I read a story from a past issue of this magazine called **The Arsehole Factor** (current issue p.24) about how **Narcotics Anonymous** encourage you to go around apologising to the people you have wronged – a great story that made me sit back and think of my own beloved arsehole.*

I'm not with him any more, and probably won't be again, because kids and drugs don't mix well. I love him sincerely, but it's hard to recount all the fucked up things he has done to me, and probably to hundreds of other people. I am not wanting sympathy, but to help you get a grip on what you might be doing to the people you love, but you don't want to be held emotionally accountable because you are using.

RESPECT

Part of respect is accountability, so for anyone to get respect, they have to earn it. If you are not getting respect, perhaps it's because of what you are doing, and how you treat the people around you.

The worst thing he has ever done, is told me "I love you", because he didn't love me enough to stop. The best thing he has ever done was give me our son. What can you imagine would be the worst thing an arsehole could do to his missus? You got it, hold the kid for ransom and literally hold a seige in public — no less with hundreds of witnesses — for junk. Screaming like a banshee "GIVE IT TO ME", like a demented loon and raging way out of control, all the while holding my precious lil' baby with one hand in a vice-like grip, leaving bruises down his back, my handbag tipped out on the street while he goes through it for money or drugs or both or anything.

Of course in his infantile mind I am the bad guy, go figure. I not only called the jacks, I tried to get him committed. There is no way my beloved arsehole would ever hurt our baby if he was in his right mind. You can lead a user to freedom, but he won't take away the bars. He only sees the need and the person stopping him from getting junk and you become the enemy. If I have money, he wants it and it is no good until it is all gone.

HOSTAGE FOR JUNK

In his time he has really hurt me; broken my ribs, broken my nose, had me on the floor and kicked the fuckery out of me with his boots on. That is why him grabbing our baby as a hostage for junk means No More — because I am the one who stands between him and his fix. I am the one who says no. I am the one who says enough. And unfortunately I am the one who wears the rage and the anger and the abuse. I can't choose to have our baby stand with me.

So when you are about to lose it, remember that the person you are most likely to lose it with is the person who loves you the most, the one who wants more for you than you can imagine, the one who puts their life on the line to save your arse from pain and hurt and humiliation and jail and maybe even death. You are likely to hurt that person, and a hundred others out there, who know exactly what it takes to say No, to say fair's fair, enough's enough.

We don't turn off the love — that never goes away — we just have to do what you would do if you were in your right mind. I know my beloved arsehole loves our baby with all his heart — even if we are fighting — I take on the responsibility of keeping our son safe from him for his sake, because he is not strong enough to do it himself. I am the horrible missus who won't let the person I love most see his baby.

THINK OF ME

Whatever it cost you, it cost me more. Next time you are about to lose it, think of me. I am your wife or your mother or your sister or your brother, and my blood bleeds as red as yours does, and my pain is as deep. If you think you feel bad because you're shitting your pants and puking, just remember me, rocking our baby through the night and going to bed alone to cry myself to sleep once more. Happy Father's Day, Arsehole. I do love you more than you will ever know. - A.L.B.

The obtaining of various substances to put into your body is a passion of many people, in fact is not just a way of life it is life itself.

The monkey rides

THE FAMILY'S BACK

I watch him and can see him thinking, its almost like the cogs are working, where, when, how, why?? Getting on is a full time business. The bunch at NA say that it's a full time job, if you devoted as much energy to being well as you did to scoring you would be a wealthy and happy man well adjusted etc ad nausea. Bunch of wankers he reckons.

I live with a Junkie, not just any junkie, but my very own beloved junkie and this is a story of our combined efforts to make it happen. Why do I bother, because I love him. Any junkies wife, husband, girlfriend boyfriend mother brother knows what it's like to see your beloved hurting.

So you make it happen. You organise the money???

Today's money is courtesy of???? Tomorrow will take care of itself, it's an old junkies thing apparently. I don't know, but I do know something is bound to happen and we'll worry about tomorrow tomorrow.

He's thinking, but his mind is elsewhere, it's in pain, suffering and how long till we see the MAN.

It's all about whoring and scoring. We never whore, we just ad lib a little, and make promises we are never going to keep, all to get by.

Today I earned the money typing out a few things about the getting of junk for the beloved man of my heart, tomorrow we will hit a charity or even sell something we realised we didn't really need, or something that could loosely be termed as belonging

to someone else. We are borderline legal, borderline honest and always keep a junkie's promise, on my word to god!!! (Did I mention we have no religious affiliation until we step through the doorways of a church, then we instantly convert to that religion ?) It's all about seeing the man, life can be unbearable until the man is seen. He will swear and curse, carry on, throw temper tantrums, and generally make a nuisance of himself. It's not personal, I know he cares, it's just the junk.

When he sees him he does a little leap, his face lights up and he can anticipate the return to normalcy for a while, 12 hours or so and he might be able to sleep tonight. It's no longer about getting stoned, that means nothing anymore, it's about existing, feeling anything except this burning need. Once the man is there all is wonderful.

He doesn't like what he does, in fact sometimes he cries when he shoves the fit in his arm and he is always reduced to tears when he hears the song played "there's a hole in daddy's arm, where all the money goes". Its not that he chooses to do this anymore, it's more like this thing owns him and he must pay it its daily due, much like normal people pay taxes.

Today the man is coming and he won't cry, he won't hurt and the world is indeed a wonderful place full of love and justice and truth and bliss, until tomorrow morning!!

Having your cake



It's no longer my friend, that drug heroin,
It dropped me then laughed in my face.
I've had enough slow and it feels good to know,
in my life it now has no place.

and eating it too

Over the last two or three years I've picked up a habit. Most weekends I chill out, smoke tobacco and cannabis, drink alcohol, and shoot up heroin, coke, and speed, depending on what's around and where my finances are at. During the week, I have a different habit. I go to work, don't smoke, have a couple of beers, and generally keep my shit together.

I'm not really sure why I'm like that. There's nothing particularly different about me or why I use drugs. They make me feel good. I like them. Most times, it's fun. But other people, close friends, some who are in the same situation as me, are now on methadone programs — not having a good time, their relationships falling apart, feeling like shit.

It hasn't all been easy. I've been a bit messy at times. I've had times of using at work, my relationships being affected, isolating myself, not caring about important things in my life, feeling the misery and despair of detoxing alone. But I guess the one thing I find most useful is being able to keep my drug use separate and special. I've got all these stupid rules about when I let myself use. I'm in a relationship with someone who keeps me in touch with reality. I've got Catholic guilt gnawing away at me, acting like an emergency brake when I start skidding around on thin ice. I've got plans that are more important than being off my head all the time. I need to look after my cat. I've also got a good mate who has his habits under control and who I can talk to. He helps me to keep things in perspective. He's also very practical. This is what he reckons are the golden rules of having your cake and eating it too.

1. Days off are vital. If you're going hard, one or two days is brilliant. You need at least five or six days if you want to really clear your head.

2. Clear your head periodically so you can look realistically at your self, life, job, finances, and so on. Even casual users will be clouded at times. One's view after one

day's break can be quite different after a six days' break!

3. When on it or off it, it is important to have at least one person you can fess up to, someone you can tell about your shenanigans and your drug use! Other drug users are probably best. It doesn't have to be someone you use with necessarily, or someone who uses at all — just someone you trust!

4. Don't get too focussed on one particular drug for too long a time!

5. Keep your drug use within reasonable hours and don't stay up all night. You can use in the morning or early afternoon, for example.

6. Be conscious of your appearance and note any weight loss, darkness under your eyes, and so on. Don't let the tired signs build up too much.

7. Be kind to yourself when coming down. Don't even think about it until three or four days have past. Give your body and brain those three or four days before you start analysing your use. Acknowledge that you are feeling flat because of your drug use, or lack of it.

8. Be conscious of your dose levels and amounts. Keeping a diary of drugs used on what days can help.

9. Try to eat as well as you can, sleep as much as possible, and do regular exercise. Eat lots of fresh vegetables and take vitamin C.

10. Keep up your commitments to family, friends and partners. You will see these relationships wane if you're on drugs a lot and are low on energy. Be conscious of isolating yourself. You may need to be on your own when you're coming down, but you can still make a phone call or two!

11. Be mindful of your finances. They can be a good governor of your use. Make sure you can afford it.

My stuff works for me. His stuff works for him. Functional drug use does happen. G & M

Many thanks to our cousins at NUAA in NSW for permission to reprint this article from User's News. Visit their website at nuaa.org.au for all sorts of information and user's stories.

Evaluating the cost-effectiveness of needle and syringe programs in Australia. 2009

Return on Investment 2

This project aimed to:

1. Estimate the population benefits of needle and syringe programs (NSPs) on HIV and hepatitis C virus (HCV) related outcomes among injecting drug users (IDUs) in Australia and in each State and Territory over the period from 2000 to 2009.
2. Explore changes in the provision of NSPs, populations at risk, and sharing behaviour on these outcomes.
3. Calculate the net present value and future values and cost-effectiveness of NSPs in terms of HIV and HCV infections averted from a health sector (government as third party payer) perspective.

FINDINGS

It was estimated that over the last decade (2000-2009) NSPs have directly averted:

- 32,050 new HIV infections;
- 96,667 new HCV infections.

During 2000-2009, gross funding for NSP services was \$243m. This investment yielded:

- Healthcare costs saved of \$1.28 billion (\$1.12bn-\$1.45bn, IQR).
- Approximately 140,000 Disability-Adjusted-Life-Years (DALYs) gained.
- Net financial cost-saving of \$1.03 billion (\$876m-\$1.98bn, IQR).

It was estimated that:

- For every one dollar invested in NSPs, more than four dollars were returned (additional to the investment) in healthcare cost-savings in the short-term (ten years) if only direct costs are included; greater returns are expected over longer time horizons.
- NSPs were found to be cost-saving over 2000-2009 in seven of eight jurisdictions and cost-effective in the other jurisdiction. Over the longer term, NSPs are highly cost saving in all jurisdictions.
- The majority of the cost savings were found to be associated with HCV-related outcomes. However, when only HIV-related outcomes were considered in the analysis, it cost \$4,500 per DALY gained associated with HIV infection.
- If patient/client costs and productivity gains and losses are included in the analysis, then the net

present value of NSPs is \$5.85bn; that is, for every one dollar invested in NSPs (2000-2009), \$27 is returned in cost savings. This return increases considerably over a longer time horizon.

- NSPs are very cost-effective compared to other common public health interventions, such as vaccinations (median cost per Quality-Adjusted-Life-Years (QALY) of \$58,000), allied health, lifestyle, and in-patient interventions (median cost of \$9,000 per DALY gained), and interventions addressing diabetes and impaired glucose tolerance or alcohol and drug dependence (median cost of \$3,700 per DALY gained).

For every dollar currently spent on the activities of NSP, more than four dollars will be returned (in addition to the investment; i.e., five times the investment) and approximately 0.2 days of disability-adjusted life gained. Over a longer time horizon there is even greater return.

Results from model-based projections into the future (2010 onwards) suggest that:

- Maintenance of current levels of NSP funding will continue to provide substantial and increasing healthcare cost savings;
- gains in life years.

Increases in the funding and provision of NSPs will:

- avert additional HCV and HIV infections;
- lead to further and increased cost-savings of funding up to 150-200% of current level if met with demand;
- reduce marginal return on investment as funding increased.
- the maximum return would be achieved at 150% to 200% of current levels.

It is important to note that this report is based on the effectiveness of NSPs in averting HIV and HCV infections among IDUs only and not on the many other benefits of NSPs, such as avoided mental health episodes and injecting related injury, psychosocial benefits, other support, referral, education and prevention etc. Costs of NSPs in this analysis included some other services (but not primary healthcare or drug and alcohol programs or the human resource cost of providing sterile injecting equipment) and thus results are conservative estimates of the true return on investment.

If you would like to join with other injectors who are taking control of their own lives speak to outreach staff at Queensland Injectors Health Network Ltd. Phone 3 620 8111 or go to www.quihn.org



The Arsehole

As a user of various illicit drugs, you will be only too familiar with the bad rap we get from society. The subtle wrinkled nose from some pharmacy staff as you pick up your methadone. The tears, rages or rejection by family. Demonisation by the media of all those dealers waiting outside the school gates. We are demons, the unpleasant faecal matter to be scraped off your shoes, evil parasites who should be shut away in prison.

The funny thing is I used to half believe it myself, and I reckon for many of us, that is part of the equation when our habit spirals out of control. I'm a piece of shit, so I'll shoot up to escape this unpleasant self-image. Oh, I just shot up again, which has confirmed my identity as a small turd. I better shoot up again. And so on.

SPINELESS

I'm clean now and hopefully will stay that way. I'd love to be one of those lucky ones who could get their drug of choice under control and enjoy injected bliss! But not for me. After countless crashes following detox, I knew I had to stay off. Maybe I had no backbone, but at least there are fewer bones to break when I did crash. Ha.

Anyway, to cut a long story short, what worked best for me was Narcotics Anonymous. Even though I didn't agree with their philosophy completely, it worked for me and that's the main thing.

Back to the self-image thing! One thing that helped was reading the excellent user magazines around like Junk Mail and User's News. It slowly dawned that despite what society keeps saying, we are human. We have human rights, like the right to respect and not being labelled as arseholes. That out-of-control

habits mean we have a health issue happening, not a criminal one.

FACING THE SHIT

However, I had to face a paradox. As I came to see myself as a reasonably good bloke again, Narcotics Anonymous (NA) was making me face some of the shit I'd done to people over the years, mainly when I'd really been hanging out. Loans from my sister I never paid back. Screaming abuse at her when she said no more loans. A few break and enters. Stealing some of the parent's stuff and hocking it. Threatening to punch out staff at the chemist because of the way they looked at me. In my struggle to stay clean, I was trying to feel better about myself but having to face all this crap I'd done and I'd start the downward spiral again.

NA are pretty big on restitution, making things right. It all sounds preachy and hints at their christian-influenced beginnings, but it worked for me. Apologies to mum and dad, my sister. Even the chemist staff, which was hard because I know some of them did, and still think, I'm a shit. There was no way I was going to say anything to the people I'd done break and enters on, but once I got some part-time work I'd occasionally drop an envelope of money into the letterboxes of those I remembered. Not much but the symbolism was important, along with a note explaining why.

KIDS AND RECTUMS

So I'm fighting what I like to call the arsehole factor. My theory goes like this. Kids might be cute, but they are totally ego, out to satisfy their own needs and desires. Growing up is mostly coming to the realisation there are other people in the world, and that our needs and desires need to be balanced with

Factor



those of others. In fact, often the happiest people seem to be those who are more concerned about others' well-being than their own.

For me at least, once my habit got out of control, I stopped growing up.

Living for that rush, that velvet emotional highway, kept me in a child-like state of being totally absorbed with self-gratification.

Result? Fuck everyone else! Being labelled pisses me off, but you have to admit the whole junkie stereotype, like all good myths, has elements of truth in some cases.

KEEPING LIFE IN BALANCE

I know this isn't everyone's story. I know guys who are using and stay in control. They are concerned about others and keep life in balance. Good on ya. I wish I could do that. But for everyone else, I humbly suggest it's worth looking at yourself and seeing if you are slipping into the arsehole factor. I read all the user's stories in these magazines, and you have to admit there's a load of bitching about the system, families, the world in general (much of it justified too!), but very little about the shit we have caused others. This is just an observation, not a judgement. I can't judge, having done this for years myself. Point is, when you are the centre of your universe, you get totally focussed on all the shit you are given, but blinded to the shit you give out.

WHAT GOES AROUND...

It is just that a happier life seems to be one where you are less the centre of the universe. I don't believe in god, but do think the universe operates

under the 'what goes around comes around' philosophy. Living completely for yourself — whether it is a user obsessing over getting junk into the vein or an investment banker obsessing over money and status — will eventually make you an arsehole. None of these are evil things, you just need to balance them with other things that count — family, friends, lovers, health and society in general.

CHOICES

Ripping off mates? Not getting along with the family? Fucking over your partner? Not enjoying the havoc this creates in your life? The choice is yours. You can choose the arsehole factor if you want, if you are prepared for the bad karma that inevitably comes with it! You do have other choices. A range of detox options so you can choose one that suits you. You can then take a break to get a clear idea of what you want to do. If don't wanna detox, there's plenty of counselling around to help you reduce your use to a point where you can balance it with other important things in life. If you aren't prepared for the bad karma, do yourself a favour and get thy shit together. Find the right kind of support that will get you back in control, whether it's going clean or using in a manageable way. After all, who wants to be an arsehole?



The Drug



Straightdom is now a national epidemic, with increasing numbers of youth being exposed to this terrible scourge tearing at the fabric of society.

Social workers report an alarming tendency for youth to turn away from a normal drug lifestyle to pursue work, money, status, cosmetic surgery and expensive hairstyling. A small percentage of adults with 'straightive' personalities have always proved difficult to treat, but the media (if no one else) believe the problem is spreading like wildfire.

"A blight on our society!" says Reverend Eckie, of the United Church of Bob. "This undermines the very foundations of the Horsestralian way of life. The almighty Bob himself was persecuted two thousand years ago by the Persian authorities for showing how opium was the path to inner truth and world peace. This denial of drugs, and chasing materialism is the downfall of society as we know it, mark my words". Community leaders agree. Instead of the warm bonding at ecstasy raves or communal toking at nature camps, they fear young adults may get caught up in the desire to feel better about themselves through long hours of study, spending over a third of their life at work and surrounding themselves with possessions.

Known derogatively as "flunkies", these people pursue their addiction in any way they can. False identities are often forged so they can work second, third, even fourth jobs as they neglect their friends and family.

"We have been pandering to the straights for too long," says Superintendent McSpeed. "Once this materialism has its hooks into them, they should just be locked away, not treated. Many of them are addicted to money after just one pay cheque. They need a good smack around the chops, if not in their veins."

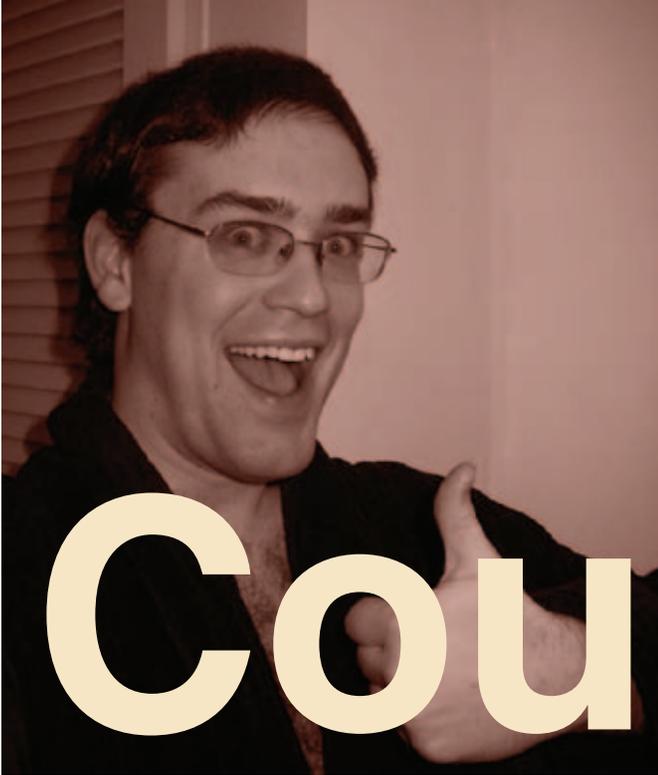
Horsestralia has adopted a policy of harm reduction, where minor straightists can avoid legal proceedings and go on the Straightadone program. This has been criticised by the United States of Amphetamine, where anyone working more than the statutory 15 hour work week and refusing to take drugs faces a hefty prison term on a "first strike you're out" basis. While some sociologists and human rights groups have called for a more lenient approach to straightists, most believe that compromise could lead to disaster in the long term.

"While most of us aren't technically Bobbists, our religious heritage is an integral part of the Horsestralian way of life," says Professor Kanabis of the Meth Institute. "We've spent centuries harnessing the power of psychoactives for the celebration of life, intimacy, world peace, artistic creativity, and living at one with the earth."

Some sociologists predict that rampant straightism could lead to a restructuring of the economy to form what they call kapitalism, where the earth would be plundered to feed the increasing needs of straights for possessions and technology, as the environment became toxic from the factories required to meet these addictions.

"That's ludicrous," says Verk Ethik, a serial overwork offender and now in a Straightadone program. "We just want to make more money to get transport devices, cool clothes, music makers and few dozen other things. I'm trying to quit, but this potential environmental problem crap is just media hysterics as usual."

Straightism has mainly been an underground movement created by extreme sects such as the Mormons who believe even tea and coffee should be not taken. While many have



Courier

been imprisoned, there is increasing criticism of the War Against Straights.

“Treating straightism as a legal issue is simply filling up our prisons,” says the Honourable Bud Leaf of the Chemically High Court of Australia. “No amount of punishment will deter flunkies from what is essentially a mental health problem. We need to treat them, not punish them.”

Straightadone program under fire

Over a decade ago, the Straightadone program began, providing straightists, often known as flunkies, a chance to adapt to a normal life. Instead of illegally working long hours and neglecting others socially, they are given large bundles of pseudo-money which they can store in pseudo-bank accounts. When their cravings are particularly strong, they can watch movies of consumer products while counsellors gently croon in their ear, “You earned and own all this, therefore you are a worthwhile person”.

While critics of the program believe patients should be forced to take psychoactive drugs that will promote warmth and empathy toward others, defenders of the Straightadone program believe patients need understanding for their dependency, not judgment.

Community anger at proposed straight room

Citizens are visibly upset over the proposed straight room, despite receiving free doses of Traquillidine from local authorities. The suggested site is Sydney’s infamous north shore region where sporadic outbreaks of individualism and consumerism threaten to create a kapitalist slum.

The Straight Room is for hard core cases – they can eat and drink non-psychoactive substances while discussing the stock

market, fashion and their bank accounts.

“Mark my words, this is the thin point of the fit,” says resident Meth Kristal. “These flunkies just build higher fences and seal themselves off from neighbours. I’m moving my family out of here.”

Although surveys show that 83.2% of statistics are not reliable, they also show the majority of residents believe a Straight Room would drive up property prices, lead to an influx of investment dealers in the area and result in used copies of the Financial Review littering the footpaths.

“This is typical media exaggeration and stereotyping,” says Sobuh Az, President of QUIHN (Queensland Institute of Healthy Non-users).

“Many non-users manage to balance their material desires and work ethic with the rest of their lives, and still interact with others.”

The Institute supports the Straight Room and has incurred strong community reaction, as judged by the number of anonymous joints mailed in with an invitation to “toke with the community, not take from the community”.

Mr Az believes that many non-users can still party hard, overcome violent urges, do the mind meld, and also create meaningful music, literature and art, but without drugs.

“We shouldn’t be imprisoned because our lifestyle differs to the norm,” says Mr Az. “And those who do get dependent on materialistic individualism should get treatment, not be marginalised and criminalised.”



This was how my boyfriend tried to convince me that it was okay to share a fit with him. And it was true. We were screwing each other without condoms, and god, I was pretty sure I loved him. Or at least I was sure that we were something closer than most of my other boyfriends. I felt connected to him somehow. He filled the lonely, desperate, abandoned part of me. He accepted the crazy, weirdo girl that none of my other boyfriends seemed to understand. It was like all of the parts of me that my family made me feel bad about were suddenly okay. That maybe I was lovable, or at least that's what I believed at the time. And it was a desperate situation. A mate had just arrived from Melbourne with a stash of speed. Of course it would've been more than enough for the three of us if this mate wasn't such a pig (but then again, we would have been the same in that situation – boring long bus ride with an onboard toilet). And when the fever hits, there's no stopping. It's the mad rush for spoons, fits, and water. And by this stage (when we realise that there are only two fits) safety runs a very poor second to the tiny white crystals. Shoot that poison arrow through my heart
Where the fuck does sanity go in those moments? It's as if you'd move heaven and earth to stick a needle in your arm,

and get the rush and exhilarating euphoria of a good whack. Fuck knows what our friend's been up to in Melbourne, I mean the guy hasn't brushed his teeth in about ten years. And he's never been too particular about who (or what) he sleeps with. And in those moments I don't seem to care that my boyfriend and I have to share a fit. In all my romantic innocence, I feel the same that I did when I was seven when my best friend and I punctured our thumbs and pressed them together in a solemn vow to remain soul sisters forever. Forever is something that I've always truly desired. The idea that someone would love me no matter where I was, or what I did. And across all time there was someone who cared about me, deeply.

So I believed (in those split seconds) that sharing with my bloke was okay. It didn't occur to me at the time that I should've had my shot first. I knew I'd been clean and hadn't been using for very long. What I didn't know at the time was that my boyfriend had been using for ten years, and started in the era when hep C didn't have a name, and HIV was around but no one really knew what it was. He knew what he'd done in the past (sharing with his buddies), and he knew that what he'd done had put him in a high risk category. In retrospect I should've taken responsibility for my own

“Well, what’s your problem, we’re fucking aren’t we?”
God, how romantic.



How Romantic

body, and never taken such a huge risk – trusting his honesty when he said he didn’t have any diseases. But you can’t argue with a man with a fit in his hand, and in those days I was just happy enough to know I was getting a share. Before we got together, I’d always used clean gear, and never would’ve taken that shot if it meant I’d have to share. But he made me feel like this was forever — we were something special — and I wanted that more than life itself.

ENTER THE VIRUS

The years passed and we found out about the hep C virus. I was so angry and upset, and I wanted to blame my bloke, but I knew that I only had myself to blame. That whole romantic idealism — the intimacy of shooting up together — gets way out of hand when you find yourself at the mercy of your partner, and reliant on them for a shot. When it comes down to it, it is just another power trip (whether you want it that way or not).

I was completely dependent on him to put that needle in my arm every time. That made me feel more helpless, unable to function without him.

We became lazy, and because we knew that we both had hep C it didn’t seem to matter that we shared. As the drugs took over our lives, our relationship fell apart piece by piece. But my fear that no one else would ever love me (because of hep C) cemented me to him. We endured torture upon torture together, and I tried so many times to leave. But that blood tie kept me there, growing weaker by the day, and doing stuff that before drugs I would never have done in a million years. Respecting my body

This year I feel like I’ve been given a reward for my hard work in giving up the needle. I went for my regular blood tests and was told that the hep C virus was no longer active in my body. I wanted to shout it to the world, and especially to my ex, and all of the people that made me feel like a dirty junky scumbag (you can all go and get fucked). I have nothing to be ashamed of, with or without the virus. I feel like this is a second chance for me now I’m no longer using. This whole experience has been a major learning curve.

I’d like to think that I’ve grown enough to respect my body and my health, and will never risk it for any man again.

Police as visitors



When it comes to inconsiderate house guests, like anybody, I have had a few. In terms of being consistently annoying though, it would have to be the police who win hands down. That this is so disproves a favourite theory of my mother's – that neat dressing is an indication of good manners.

For a start, their sense of timing can be atrocious. The other day, I was sitting quietly at home mixing up an after-work taste, when suddenly the front door swung off its hinges and in stormed three policemen. There were waving a piece of paper that they said was an invitation, when I knew I hadn't sent out any invites on account of only having enough drugs for one person.

It put me in an awful position. If I had put the needle into my arm before they reached the living room, I knew I would feel so rude for not being able to offer them anything. If I didn't do it, I felt certain that they would probably demand my drugs and not even share them with me. I'm sorry, call me rude, but I took the first option.

Well, the way they reacted you would have thought I had burst into their house and taken the last of their drugs. I offered them a seat but instead they asked me to stand, and demanded that I produce more drugs. I explained that I didn't have any left, but for some reason they wouldn't believe me. Now, when my friends ask me if I have any drugs left and I say "no", they will accept that there are none available and the topic of conversation will move on to something else.

The boys in blue however, could not take no for an answer. I mean I have had friends who never talked about anything but drugs, but that was because all they did was take drugs. That sort I can understand; it is boring, but understandable. But when people don't take drugs, visit you in a frenzied manner, and then want to talk about nothing but drugs, well personally I find it a bit much.

Either they had atrocious hearing or bad short-term memories, for they kept asking me the same questions over and over. Given their extreme state of disappointment, I thought it best not to tell them that it was heroin I had just taken. It made me wonder: does the police force choose people with bad manners, or do they just train them to be like that?

If that wasn't enough, they then said they were going to go through my house with a fine tooth comb, and began to dismantle everything. At this stage, I found it a real struggle to remain polite. Once they had completely destroyed my house, finding of course no drugs (I'd told them there were none left), they left. No thank you for having them over, no invitation to visit them, I was quite shocked.

After putting my house back together, I gave the whole event some thought and concluded that there needs to be some serious changes made to police training.

1. They need to be taught it is rude to visit people they don't know without an invitation.
2. If they persist in this, they should always bring their own drugs.
3. They should stop asking the same questions over and over – in fact, they should have training in conversations, or they will have no friends.
4. If they pick something up, they should put it back in the same place, and if they break something, they should fix it or at least offer to pay to have it fixed.

Given their one track minds on drugs, I think their reading list should be broadened. As a last resort if they only want to read about drugs, they should be given *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* or this *Tracks* magazine, not *The Guide to Better Living* by Fred Niles.

Hypocrisy



motional pain racking my brain.

Psych doctors telling me I'm insane

Giving me a label, of which I'm unable

To deal with, making me more unstable

Leaving me numb.

Then there's the filth

Wearing their badges like quilts

Fucking my day with warrant checks they play.

Just to let you know, their pressure runs the show

Running and running, left with nowhere to go,

A-lot of us are smarter than they

But only with benefits we're paid

We know where it's at; while they get fat

But they use roids and weights

To keep it at bay.

So they use too, then judge me and you.

Cause we're driven to self medicate

Just so we can relate or escape

I'd rather be called a junkie

Than mentally ill, but that's my fate.

Drugs may take my pride

But stop me from suicide

It's only from myself I hide

They'd never know the pain I hide

Or how the drugs stop me shooting???? their side!

Here's the rub, we're constantly judged

By those with no understanding

Only their quotas demanding

To put us inside, so fellow users,

Enjoy the ride and pray you don't end up

inside.

Sniff

Getting into coke was easy, in fact it was far too easy. I was at Uni and had a huge amount of work on my plate. Everyone was using, at least 30 percent of the Uni were on something, it just seemed natural to start. My drug of choice is cocaine and I'm a sniffer. People talk about peer pressure but it simply wasn't that way at all with me, I just gravitated towards it naturally and liked the way it made me feel. There's your sign! I just decided one day to try it because everyone was into eccies and coke. I guess I didn't want to miss out on what I could see happening around me, but there was no pressure from anyone; in fact I had to do some arm twisting to get on at first. The rather ironic thing about sniff for me was that it got better the more times I took it; that's to say the first few times I did it, it had virtually no effect. I did what most stupid teenagers in my position would have done – did more and more so the high would get better. The benefits of sniff are that it gives you boundless energy and confidence. Basically that's why it's a yuppie drug –doctors, stockbrokers, lawyers and people with high pressure jobs need that extra edge, but all knives have two sides to every blade. The affects of too much coke are — to say the least, — easy to see. By the time I left Uni I had lost 20 kilos and looked like a concentration camp victim. My mum was horrified and thought I had AIDS. Things broke down at home and I became homeless, first moving in with my friends, then eventually the streets or a convenient squat. I've heard of orgies with cocaine, but my experience is most people simply don't go into that sort of thing. It's not cup

sniff

of tea, but I have had some wild sex while using. And most coke heads I knew didn't inject so we didn't worry about AIDS and hep C, but I knew you could get hep C through sniffing if you shared equipment. I Obviously every action has an equal and opposite reaction and I was a drug addict, living on the streets and unable to support myself because my addiction had left telltale scars – not on my arms, but on my brain. I had taken it all too far and was using a gram a day. The result is I turned into a drooling idiot who just lay there shaking and occasionally moaning out a word or two. Then I'd get up and find/steal the money for the next fix. I had given it complete control of my life. Surrendered myself completely to the drug. Needless to say the downside ended in incarceration and thankfully sobriety.

I'll spare you the shakes and the little green men on the curtains, but of course detox was bad, but possibly worse with coke because they simply don't see a lot of it here and aren't as sure on how to help with detox. Coke is still a bit of a designer drug and isn't huge here yet. But it's growing daily. I cried a lot, must have looked like a scared kid, skinny and crying. I got off easy in court and only did 300 hours community service, but I learned my lesson.

Looking back I am nwow working in my profession and I still use sniff occasionally. It's not an everyday thing with me anymore. It can't be, but it's a fine line between balance use and becoming a user again. My mind is more focused and I feel more in control and have less doubts about myself. I now control the drug and my use – it doesn't control me.



Our mission is to provide innovative and appropriate services, addressing a range of drug-related issues, to illicit drug users and the wider community in Queensland

HEALTH & HARM REDUCTION

Education & training is provided to clients, professionals and the wider community in regard to illicit drug use and blood-borne virus transmission.

Services offered include:

- Mix-Up (is a peer education program for current drug users)
- Brochures and printed materials
- Health Promotion
- Individual and group education sessions (e.g. blood borne viruses, vein care, sexual health, art groups)
- Needle disposal issues and business outreach
- Support and input into research, community development and policy making.

NSP's are part of Australia's public health strategy that aims to reduce the harms associate with drug use, including the transmission of blood-borne viral infections, by the provision of sterile injecting equipment. The NSP neither condemns nor condones drug use and are located across our Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast offices.

These NSP's are provided free and in a friendly, non-judgemental environment:

- Sterile injecting equipment and disposal containers
- Referral to housing, health and welfare services
- Information and education aimed at reducing blood-borne virus transmission and sexually transmitted infections and other welfare

illicit drugs
peer support
harm minimization
education
needle syringe
& program
workforce
development program
health promotion



treatment
counselling
families
dual
diagnosis

The primary focus of QuiHN Treatment Services is to empower individuals to establish control over their illicit drug use and lives through emphasising individual's values, personal decision-making and goal setting. The philosophy underlying QuiHN Treatment Services is one of harm reduction and holistic wellbeing with a focus on safety.

TREATMENT & SUPPORT SERVICES

QuiHN offers a range of counselling and support services across our Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast offices. We provide client-focussed services to assist people with substance use reduction, cessation or relapse prevention as well as support around mental health concerns and any other support needs clients identify.

In addition to individual support services, QuiHN offers a range of group programs. Groups respond to the varying needs of clients. The groups we currently offer include:

- Maize (Brisbane) / Changing Habits (Sunshine Coast) / Positive Changes (Gold Coast) – a psychosocial education group aimed at supporting clients to address their substance use and mental health concerns
- MudMaps – a weekly group held in Brisbane to support clients who are contemplating changes in their drug use
- Womens Circle – an informal, non-judgemental and child-friendly support group for women held in Brisbane

The Parent, Child and Family Support Program (PCF) provides counselling, education, support and advocacy for parents, children and significant others or carers affected by mental health and / or drug use issues.

In addition to individual support, the PCF program provides group work support to address parenting issues and / or child protection concerns. The Treehouse groups are run across the Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast offices, with an additional weekly support group available in Brisbane.

QuiHN responds to the needs of significant others via individual support and workshops. The Significant Other Support (SOS) workshop is for those who care for and support people with drug use and related mental health concerns. This workshop is provided in the Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast offices.

Kick it!

*Drink or smoke, have a toke
Snort the lot or have a shot.*

*Chemical dependencies
Seem to rule our lives*

*One day I'll kick the habit
Or kick the habit, I'll try*

*It's a lot harder than people
s'go without a smoke or a toke*

*snort, shot or drink
Body craves and moans for more*

*Is it to be chemically dependent
to ravage your soul?*

*Kick the habit, don't even dabble
Kick the habit, rid the pain*

*Chemical dependencies amidst my brain
Kick the habit!*



A Beacon in the darkness

Life in the fast lane

Snort the lot or have a shot

Chemical dependencies

Seem to rule our lives

One day I'll kick the habit

Or kick the habit, I'll try

It's a lot harder than people think

s'go without a smoke or a toke

snort, shot or drink

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Is it to be chemically dependent

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Kick the habit, don't even dabble

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*Chemical dependencies amidst my brain
Kick the habit!*

Dropped

JEF

ternity

Brothers in shooting arms

Hypocrisy

Peter's Story Crossroads

How romantic

From beginning to Endo

Twelve stepping tea...

ane's Story

Happy

Father's Day

The Family's back

The drug courier

Police as visitors

Living with the Devil

Having your cake and eating it too

The arsehole factor

Return on investment 2