

“It got to the point that we couldn’t leave home because he would rob us while we were gone and use the money to buy drugs. I never thought I’d put my own son in jail, but he left us no choice.”

— Parents of John L.,
aggravated robbery, 6 years,
Stillwater State Prison,
Minnesota
(*Free at Last*)

You have been powerless to control your use. You’ve been doing drugs against your will. You continue using in spite of negative consequences. Again, you’ve seen the problems your drug use has brought on. You know you need to stop. You’ve tried before.

Often, addicts look for a “reason” for the addiction. They want to blame their marriage, job, neighborhood, family, the police, and so on. They’d rather do that than admit that they are the problem. Again, this is just denial at work.

As long as you look for an answer to the problem outside yourself, you won’t look at the real problem. Here’s the reality, as stated by an addict named Lewis: “Lewis’s problem is Lewis.” Your addiction problem is your problem, no one else’s. You need to surrender, to “admit defeat” to begin recovery. But remember, other people *can* help you recover from your addiction.

You may actually feel defeated. Your outer stance of being strong, powerful, in control, above problems, is crumbling. You may start feeling down about what’s happened. This is a positive sign. It means you’re getting past your denial.

The Importance of Telling Your Story

Another crucial part of the first step in recovery is to tell addicted others your story. The following story shows the importance of sharing with others.

Some seventy years ago, a stockbroker who was down on his luck because of his drinking problem sat in the kitchen of a house in Akron, Ohio. The house belonged to a doctor who had the same problem. They simply could not stop drinking. They sat over a cup of coffee discussing a letter the broker had received from Carl Jung, a famous physician and pioneer of psychotherapy. In the letter, Jung told them that if their new group was to be successful, they had to pass on their stories. Essentially the key to success was to

help each other rather than trying to recover on their own. *Telling of the story* was born and has been the cornerstone of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). The framework that the founders of this program developed has helped millions— yes, millions—of people recover from many kinds of addiction.

Professionals tried to help for years, but it wasn't until AA came up with the idea of the story that people began recovering from addiction.

Put simply, the story is about change. It's about admitting that you have been powerless over your addiction and that your life has become unmanageable as a result.



EXERCISE **40** EXERCISE

Telling Your Story

To take your first step in recovery, you need to tell your “story” to your counselor and group. You need to talk about what your life was like, what happened, and what it's like now. Think about all the times you were powerless over drugs, the people your drug use affected, the consequences you've suffered as a result of your use. Be completely honest with yourself and with your group. It's time to tell your story.

People who take this first step usually understand and accept these ideas:

- You must completely accept that you have a problem.
- You recognize there are things happening you cannot control by yourself.
- You have to ask for help from others to be successful in this effort.
- You must focus on what you *can* do.