

Chindi –early 40s, Northwest USA

- **Member and Online Meeting Facilitator, SMART Recovery® Online**
- **Former maladaptive behavior: alcohol**
- **Sober: ten months and counting**

What has SMART Recovery® meant to me? As I look back on life, I can say that I was a mental bomb just waiting to go off. In almost all respects you could say that I had accomplished most every goal I had ever set out to achieve and my health had never been an issue. Granted, I had minor set backs, but nothing that was too major. I was what some people might call an over-achieving perfectionist. I saw nothing wrong with that and often wondered why more people did not do everything to the best of their ability.

Starting in the summer of 2000 a series of one-after-another life events just didn't go right. Professional, personal, financial, health... you name it, it happened. No matter how well thought out, no matter how great the effort, no matter how good the intentions everything went wrong and nothing worked out. A divorce in the summer of 2003 was the thing that really did me in. It was not so much a nasty fight divorce, but one in which the total faith, trust and loyalty I had put into it was betrayed. Over the course of the next year insomnia started in. Every time I went to bed I would lay there for hours going over everything that had happened. I like to call it brain racing. It finally got to the point where I was not sleeping for three to four days. Well, that was the final straw! When you quit sleeping you quit thinking. I turned to drinking for sleep. Honestly, no other reason. I JUST WANTED SLEEP! Somewhere along the way it turned to drinking just to drink and forget it all.

I was a closet drinker and did it behind closed doors. Although I'm sure some people had concern, nobody had a clue how much I was drinking. I had no family nearby, most of the friends were attached to my marriage so faded away when that ended and I didn't socialize with the people I worked with. I finally bailed out of the job, packed up and moved back nearer to family and old friends. But by then I was firmly entrenched in the downward spiral.

During this period I recognized that I was in trouble. I went to a couple of AA meetings and the second one I walked out of so pissed off it wasn't funny. I couldn't accept anything that left a person at a point of indefinite hopelessness. Even as messed up as my thinking was I accepted that I had put myself into that position and I had the power and choice to get myself out of it.

As with everything in my life up to that point I put 100% into the drinking. On the day I ended up in the hospital I was up to buying six or seven bottles of booze at a time, scheduling a couple days of vacation before or after a weekend, closing the front door on the world and going on three, four, five day benders. Only ending when the booze ran out. The last time I came pretty close to death and I don't even want to think of how many times before that I had drank myself to that point. On the 23rd of August 2006 I walked out of that hospital resolved to get my life back in order. Since I knew that AA and 12-step programs didn't sit well with me, I started looking for alternatives.

SMART Recovery® was shown to me by a counselor in another program when he felt that they had helped me about as far as they could. What started out as a plan to quit

drinking has turned into a journey to change my life and ways of looking at it. Since I choose not to talk about it with my family or friends and I refuse to talk about it at work, **SMART Recovery® has given me somewhere to come and discuss my journey with others who understand and pass no judgment.** They are traveling their own journey. I have come to realize that for every one of the billions of people on Earth there are an equal number of roads traveled as people live their lives. Yet, when we leave that individual road many of us end up in the exact same ditch. It's when we try to climb out of the ditch that some of us find SMART Recovery®. We help our self and each other out of the ditch through support in the chat room, discussing issues and the SMART Recovery® tools in meetings and reading and sharing insights and wisdom in the forums.

This started out as a plan to quit drinking. With SMART Recovery® I have learned and now have at my disposal the tools needed to keep from ever going back into that ditch. It will also lead to a much fuller and happier life in the future.

Here are some of the highlights of what I've learned so far:

1- We must hold our self accountable for our actions, make the tough decisions and do the hard work our self. Nobody else can. On the other hand, this also allows us to give our self praise and acknowledgement for the successes that we achieve.

2- We must accept the past. No matter how terrible it was and no matter how awful things were, it is the past. We have to learn that if we can't forget it we must find the proper place to put it and move on with life.

3- Life is life. It has nothing personal against us. Sometimes bad things happen, sometimes good things happen. We have to take it in stride and go with the flow. IT'S NOTHING PERSONAL!

4- Sometimes other peoples actions are personal and do affect us. We can't let those things dictate the quality of our life. I'm at a loss for words to express this in a deeper sense so I will leave it to you to interpret my meaning.

5- And this, the most important lesson. Do not ever, ever sit down to write a short post when you are jacked up on a quadruple shot hazelnut mocha.

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