

Leslie HB – 43, Fresno, CA

- **Former maladaptive behavior: alcohol**
- **Member, Message Board Liaison and Online Meeting Facilitator-in-Training, SMART Recovery® Online**
- **Sober: 5 months (one slip) and counting**

I came to SMART Recovery® in January of 2007. I had become physically addicted to alcohol and could not get through more than three or four hours without starting to experience withdrawal symptoms, including elevated heart rate, excessive perspiration, and uncontrollable shaking.

I had been working on giving alcohol up for a few years before finding SMART Recovery® and underwent my first detoxification at home without any medical or social support, with the exception of my partner. The process of leaving an addiction can be a bumpy one, and I was on and off of alcohol a few times prior to January. Since I was struggling, I started looking at Alcoholics Anonymous for possible support, but I read some of The Big Book and knew it was not for me. I would have left a meeting in disgust because their beliefs are so far outside of my own experiences. I did not know there were secular options available.

I started searching on the Internet and found out about SMART Recovery® on <http://www.about.com>. I spent some time in the chat room and attended a meeting, and the approach really made sense to me. I detoxified at home again and managed to remain sober for about 45 days. I had a relapse in Feb/March but have been without alcohol for two additional months, and I'm returning to school in June to earn my Drug and Alcohol Counseling Certificate so I can go to work helping others get free of their chemical burdens.

SMART Recovery® offers a way to examine our beliefs and our self-talk, to learn to think rationally about our drinking and drug use. It is held together by a network of human beings that have learned the methods and seek to assist others in implementing them. It is an online community, but it is a true, vibrant community in which everyone acts, in one way or another, in support of others.

I have even been open about my sexual orientation, as I am a lesbian, and have never been made to feel uncomfortable or unwelcome because of it. **Acceptance of others is a key component of SMART Recovery®.** These individuals have become some of my closest friends.

I can't tell you if I would have succeeded without SMART Recovery®, but I do know that shared experiences and know-how have gone a long way as far as giving me confidence that I could break the addiction and reclaim my life. I feel free of alcohol's grip at last. I have become a volunteer myself, and I'm in training to become a meeting facilitator, so **my experience with SMART Recovery® has not only helped me quit using alcohol, it has also helped me shape my future.**

LeslieHB, age 43
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