

The Wisdom of Addiction.

Via Louisa Jane Weston

I want to tell my story, because the life I'm living today is a miracle.

There was a time I was desperate. There was a time I wanted to get out of my sordid body every moment of my waking day. But I am no longer suffering that way.

You see, this month I turn one year sober.

One year—that is by far, the longest time I've gone without a drink, since I was 11 years old.

Here is what I have discovered throughout this past year—we are all in a process of either recovery or relapse, in any given area of our lives.

Addiction is a temporary substitute for honesty. Honesty cannot be bought. Honesty cannot be compensated for, nor can it be avoided. Honesty is messy, uncomfortable, foreign and multi-layered. The truth is never found in quick-fixes.

Addiction is a symptom. Symptoms spread like cancer if we treat them as if they are the problem—rather than looking underneath and nipping the root cause in the bud.

We are all suffering from a certain kind of sickness, which is something like a culturally appropriated inability to grieve. I made myself so ill through neurosis and psychosis, that all I could do to make it back home to myself, was feel the pain I was running from.

On treating the malady itself—addiction does not respond well to threats, confinement, isolation or shame. Nor will it disappear with a “good talking to.” Addiction becomes exponentially more destructive the more it is ignored.

I know now that faith is real and worth having, otherwise I'd be either dead or in an asylum. I found help when I needed it most, because of one moment when I gave up and effectively surrendered to a God of my own understanding—without even realizing what I was doing.

I hardly even believed in “God.”

I knew there had to be something out there that was greater than me, because I didn't make the sun rise in the morning. But, the idea of that “something” responding to a prayer was far beyond the reaches of my understanding.

I was at a street festival—dancing and high, as usual. I looked up at the blue-white sky of the East London summer, and I said to myself, “If there is anything out there, please take my life from me, because I can't do this any more.”

I didn't even really know what "this" was that I couldn't do—but by "take my life" I was referring to was death of my body. Now know that part of my ego died in that moment, which meant I could finally receive help.

A few days or weeks later (I don't know for sure, because my relationship with time was not a linear one), on that same corner of the same street, someone offered me a hand into a solid spiritual salvation—which I believe saved my life.

I did not get immediately sober. It was over a year before I admitted defeat for the final time.

The last time I relapsed, it was with cocaine. I was with this weird architect guy who was about 70—he hired me to do erotic wrestling. I needed the money, and when he took a little vial of white crystals from his coat pocket and assured me, "It's New York's finest, honey," I couldn't say no.

I welcomed the familiar ritual of it—tapping it onto a mirrored table, crushing it up with a credit card, cutting and then crushing again—before filing it into neat little lines that tapered off towards each glittering end. We rolled up a \$20 bill tightly, and took turns putting it into our noses and snorting.

I felt it hit the back wall that connects my nose to my mouth, then it dripped down my throat—this was my favorite part. It was so—dirty. My eyes would start rolling back, and I'd clench my jaw, letting go for a moment that lasted forever. For that sacred split second, my thoughts would be clear. I took a shortcut to clarity, and I was willing to pay any price—to wash my mind clean with a substance.

We got up, walked around in a jittery way and started acting out the scene we'd prepared. He played the roll of a man who was my slave, and I was "Super Woman." We kept doing more and more lines of coke, until I was on my back and on the floor, his rugged breathing down my neck—paying for a temporary fill, from a temporary woman.

I imagine we did more coke before the ride home—but as usual, I couldn't remember how I got home.

All I know was that it happened a year ago, and that was the last time I used.

I have now set my entire life up to stay sober.

I was so ready—I'd been ready for years, but I'd always relapse. I'd wake up the morning after, and resolve to quit—then I'd start coming down. My skin would itch, and my mind would return to its desolate sadness—I'd convince myself that I deserved one more night to enjoy myself.

It was just going to be "this one night." It's always, only this one night.

Lying in a cold bed with my teeth chattering, looking at the curtains as they breathe—it's difficult to make long-term plans. Even my family stopped answering my pleas for help.

Sometimes I'd manage to endure a day of abstinence. Sometimes it was even as long as a few days.

I filled in the blackness with obsessions over men, shopping, money. My personality changed the moment I met someone new. I didn't even know if the words coming out of my mouth belonged to me anymore—I genuinely couldn't recognize the person I'd become.

I didn't pay my rent, I couldn't hold down a job, and I broke up friendship after friendship. I didn't brush my teeth or shower or wash my hair. I smelled. I was incapable of taking care of myself. The doctors called it mental illness. I call it loneliness.

I would have spent the rest of my miserable life running from myself—finding momentary gasps of relief after vomiting my guts up, or finding happiness when I starved myself to the point of delirium. It is only with grace, from the beyond, that I had the courage to look daily and deeply at myself.

It has nothing to do with me—there is nothing I can do. I am powerless.

I want people to drop the idea that they make things happen—that if someone's life is brilliant, it's because they're a good person, or if someone's life is awful, it's because they're bad. There are only our memories and God in this life. Blame is futile.

I grew exhausted of watching the sun rise and wondering if I'd ever know what "normal" was. I was terrified of sleeping, eating, and anything that resembled routine. When I eventually got into bed, the sheets would feel like sandpaper on my loveless skin.

The more terrible the situation became, the more I got familiar with what I was made of.

Addiction obliterated everything I thought I knew and revealed the substance of life. It gave me grit. I had numerous spiritual revelations at the bottom of my pit that I will continue to unravel evermore, because they are the sounding chords to my symphony.

What tortured me became my greatest teacher. In our darkest days, we are not suffering—we are healing. The darkness, and all that is misunderstood, is a salving balm that nourishes our nature—it is not the light that makes us exceptional.

If we pretend everything is fine, while staring at the ceiling at the end of the day, asking unanswerable questions—we are probably in the throes of socially acceptable addiction. If we are slaves to money, work, routine, our boss, our wife, fantasy, other people's expectations, time, food or even our own beliefs—we have replaced the desire for the infinite with finite means.

"Is this all there is?"

I'm happy to report back, from the other side, that the answer is a resounding, "No."

I'm not saying we should create unnecessary chaos in our lives. I'm saying we should embrace those things we don't want to deal with. Do what makes you uncomfortable. Embrace it in whatever way you know how, because that will introduce you to the unknown. Get to know what you become in adversity, and see if it changes you for the better. Fair warning—this is not a short-term plan.

None of my problems are the reasons I used—I used because I wanted to escape.

I had an insatiable itch to get away from myself, through any means necessary. Or, on the flip side, an enormous cavity that needed to be filled. It's the same cavity people fill with television or copious amounts of fast food. The same cavity people fall into to avoid following their dreams. There are as many excuses as there are humans with the ability to find them. I'm lucky that the route I chose was destructive enough to make healing from it my life's purpose, and that drug abuse is common enough that I was able to find a tribe.

The beautiful places I visit, the fantastic people I call friends, the wholesome food I cook for myself and my loving partner only provide me with solace, because I have faith. Without that, the prizes of living a sober life are utterly redundant.

Now, I want to show the things I learned to other people.

The price of indulgence—of being self-obsessed and shameful, two basic components for addiction—is too high, even for momentary relief.

I've always insisted, "The fact I use drugs isn't the problem," and I was right.

Drugs were, for me, a long-winded solution to the spiritual malady that many people from: "How do I best fill the God-sized hole inside of me? How may I be relieved of my humanness? How can I help?"

Pain became the gateway into a world of learning humility and finding grace.

Every addiction is a gateway in itself, and each time I can find it in me to reverse the process of seeking outward, and look within instead—to ask why I am using drugs or people or money—the answer has always been so that I can find the golden thread of truth that weaves us all together.