

Introduction to the interview transcript:

The interview was part of a study examining young men's experience of early recovery from substance-use disorder in 12-step fellowships (e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous). The aim of the study was to examine processes of change in light of the participants' journey towards recovery and wellbeing. The participant has been named Charlie to protect his anonymity. He was 26 years old at the time of the interview and had been in recovery for one year. He attended a day treatment centre for his severe dependence to crack cocaine. After completing treatment, he continued with Narcotics Anonymous recovery programme and 12-step meetings. He had been abstinent from drugs and alcohol for 13 months.

1 I: What does recovery mean to you?

2 P: Ahm, recovery for me is being normal you know enjoying life
3 basically I mean obviously life's hard at times, recovery doesn't
4 suddenly change that the hard times won't happen but, it's just on
5 the whole living and enjoying life without having to, without
6 having to constantly look for something, which will make me better
7 which might be drugs, alcohol, money, girlfriends, people
8 whatever you know for me it's like when I was using I'd see other
9 people they can do all this normal stuff ah they're not using drink
10 and drugs like I used them and their just getting on with life and
11 they seem pretty happy with that and content really the biggest
12 thing is just being content with what I've got and being grateful for
13 what I've got you know 'cause when I went to the [treatment]
14 centre I was just angry and so ungrateful, negative basically you
15 know I couldn't see that there was anything good in my life 'cause
16 of the way I was feeling and I put that down to everything, now I
17 enjoy my job I enjoy going to work before I thought I hated my job,
18 my boss me off blah, blah, blah you know.

19 I: You said that the biggest thing is being content. Can you
20 elaborate on that?

21 P: Yes well I think I've grown up basically ahm (pause) yeah I've
22 just grown up, I've realized that life's not always easy and that's
23 okay, I can deal with it without using drugs and (pause) I realize
24 it's not all about me, I was so wrapped up in myself you know this
25 is what I haven't got this and that is what I want blah, blah, ahm
26 you know I was very unhappy and miserable (pause) now I'm
27 content, happy, I've become responsible as well, I've taken
28 responsibility ahm I know I've got an addiction problem you know
29 sometimes my thinking will go bad or whatever and I'll just think
30 other people are at fault, but now I can just stop and look at my part
31 in the situation you know, I'm reliable, responsible person really,
32 and it hasn't always been like that at all. I feel much happier these
33 days.

34 I: Okay. Do you see yourself recovering?

1 P: I do see a change in myself (pause) it's funny actually kind of
2 (pause) I had an awareness that the way I was feeling you know it
3 was a far cry from how I used to feel sort of thing but it's almost
4 like a see it less of myself its' almost ahm, 'cause in my experience
5 things got better for me you know, day by day by day and I'd be
6 like three or four months sober looked back on what had happened
7 and think you know this is how far I've come so it's something that
8 I can look back and see that change but I think it's more apparent
9 to other people you know and that's, that's the experience of other
10 people like friends of mine and I'll just say that you've changed,
11 you look much better, the way they look the way they sound and
12 ahm you know and it's so apparent that they've changed and they'll
13 say really, I don't sort of feel it as much you know sure I have
14 noticed a change but ahm I think it's definitely more apparent to
15 other people.

16 I: So has the way people see you changed?

17 P: Yeah definitely yeah you know close friends of mine noticed it
18 you know that I'm just happier and that I'm okay now and yeah
19 lots of those people have definitely noticed it, my family too ahm
20 it is quite interesting. My boss, the other week you know he had a
21 really nice thought of me that you're just unrecognizable he said,
22 he said I even look different, I'm more confident, I'm there every
23 day on time and he said he's just absolutely amazed by it so yeah
24 people have definitely noticed.

25 I: Okay. Has there been any major challenge or difficulty in your
26 recovery?

27 P: In the early days I couldn't be around people who were drinking
28 and using ahm you know but now I do if there's a good reason for
29 me to be there or go there, 'cause that obsession to use drink and
30 drugs is gone now you know ahm that mental obsession I always
31 had that I was gonna pick up that first drug whether I wanted to or
32 not you know, I can go in a situations where you know some, it's
33 getting less and less now but sometimes I walk into somewhere and
34 I find it a bit difficult I'm young and everyone's sort of drinking

1 and using drugs and I sort of think I'm missing out and I feel a bit
2 self-conscious and that kind of stuff 'cause I messed up, but I sort
3 of know that I can have a great time without having to have drugs
4 or anything really.

5 I: Okay

6 P: I mean in the early days ahh you know (pause) very early
7 recovery before I was still embroiled in day care at the treatment
8 centre I didn't have anything to do with my friends who were using
9 or drinking even if that was socially you know I stayed out of pubs
10 obviously didn't put myself in any of those situations and got to
11 [12-step] meetings, used the phone a lot spoke to people that I was
12 in treatment with ahm I just got to lots of [12-step] meetings really
13 ahm 'cause that obsession was still about to use and I didn't want
14 to use ahm but I think as time's gone on, all the daily things that I
15 do to work my recovery programme you know I've got the whole
16 sort of routine that I do sort of wake up meditate, exercise, get to a
17 meeting, you know talk to my friends, 'cause I know that my
18 thinking's gonna get me in trouble you know that's the real
19 problem. Going back to drugs.

20 I: How do you feel about not using drugs?

21 P: Ahm (pause) it's just that, I've just come to accept that I have
22 an addiction problem you know I can't put any drug inside my body
23 whether be alcohol, whatever. I've got enough experience to tell
24 me what happens when I do that you know it's just a fact of life, if
25 I stay sober and I focus on my recovery, I'll have a good life ahm,
26 if I go and use drugs I've got enough experience to tell me exactly
27 what's gonna happen you know and ahm, and I think I never really
28 used drugs like normal people you know.

29 I: What do you mean like normal people?

30 P: People who might go out and sort of go out and have a few
31 drinks and drugs for them kind of enhance what already is there in
32 their life whether it be friendship and that kind of stuff ahm, you
33 know drugs just, I had to take drugs to be okay basically I didn't
34 like being clean you know I just didn't like being clean.

1 I: Clean?

2 R: Clean, sober you know not have a drink or drug in my body I

3 didn't like it you know if I took them I could be okay you know

4 and that's, that's not how I see the people who kind of use socially.

5 I've come to accept, I can't use drugs or drink.

6 I: On a daily basis what do you do to stay away from drugs?

7 P: A lot of the time, really early days, I just sort of gritted my teeth

8 and got through it you know sometimes I'd sort of call someone

9 ahm you know and I just kind of struggled through it but really I

10 knew, I know that if I didn't do something I was gonna use [drugs]

11 really you know I got through that short time, 12-step meetings

12 really helped me you know and see other people clean and just

13 think I can do this, I can do this and hear other people's experience.

14 I think that was the biggest thing early days for me and ahm now I

15 still have thoughts about drugs you know sometimes it will look

16 quite appealing to me, I'll remember the good times and all that

17 kind of stuff but even when using might look appealing I can look

18 at all the consequences that are involved, what's gonna happen if I

19 pick up that first drug and I think, what that was a mad idea whereas

20 before those consequences didn't do anything, if that obsession was

21 on me I'd use drugs guaranteed you know I didn't have that mental

22 defense, but I have today you know there's odd times when I think

23 I'm missing out yeah on the whole sort of social thing and thinking

24 about when using was fun for me you know, not towards the end

25 of my using but when it was still fun for me and that, but I'd think

26 well maybe it'll be different this time but I know that's my thinking

27 that's all you know, I don't pick up and it's not like I (pause) it's

28 not like I feel I need to pick up to feel alright I already feel alright

29 and I think about drugs of course! I do you know I used them for

30 quite a long time you know.

31 I: Besides the 12-step programme have you developed any new

32 hobbies, activities or routines?

33 P: I think exercise is a big thing for me now I started cycling a lot

34 again and that kind of stuff and spending time with friends who

1 don't drink and use ahm I've got some good friends who are in
2 recovery, I spend time with them, and normally if they were out
3 somewhere they might have a couple of drinks or whatever but if I
4 was with them they wouldn't and yeah and just spending time with
5 people and (pause) just sort of getting out and about I sort of have
6 a day out in the city you know go down to the park or somewhere
7 where I like to be and then just go around see different things jump
8 on the train, it is important for me to be on the move definitely and
9 I'm someone who needs to be kept busy you know yeah I had sort
10 of two weeks off work, it must have been a month ago you know I
11 thought fantastic I've taken two weeks off and I found it really quite
12 difficult at points just having nothing to do and my head would go
13 quite often and I'd start feeling a bit flat and that kind of stuff and
14 I found it quite hard to sort of motivate myself to go out and do
15 different stuff, I find work is important for me 'cause just to have
16 a structure in my life really and I've just got so much going on in
17 my life now it's, sometimes it almost seems too much, I don't have
18 enough time and I have to pick and choose who am I gonna go and
19 see when I've got free time this weekend and all that kind of stuff
20 'cause that's a big turnaround I had nothing in my life before
21 recovery.