

"An autobiography of a journey of change"

To each of us it seems that sometimes in our lives, we go down a one-way street the wrong way and find ourselves not in a car crash physically, but in a spiritual emotional and physical bubble, which we cannot escape from!

My journey of change came with a number of life's unerring abilities, to completely knock me down as if I had been ten skittles, and yet still in the beginning it didn't occur to me stop what I was doing. I couldn't stop and didn't want to stop.

-Alcoholics Anonymous-

I am an alcoholic/ addict and today I am almost proud to say this, as in this moment as I write this journal, I am many years in sobriety, and fully understand my condition, both spiritually and physically.

Understanding also brings in to me that I am also the adult child of an alcoholic, and being brought up in an alcoholic controlled environment, I became this trembling fearful child, who tasted alcohol at the age of eleven, and was straight away under its fearful hold, it was a magic elixir that was to turn me into a person who could not control his drinking, and someone who was also a master manipulator of those around him.

In 1995 my mother became terminally ill with cancer, I held her in my arms while the drugs she had been given, shut down her life, my father was strewn on the floor, in blackout from drinking, unaware of the passing of my mother. Of course I drank too, it was the only way to kill the pain for a while. It took less than two years for my father to drink himself to death, and still it didn't occur to me to stop.. my denial was so great, I was so in self I never saw the divorce coming, I never could acknowledge the damage I had done to my marriage and relationships with others, particularly my children.

Now I was really in a bubble of despair, the game was up for me, in desperation I rang someone I had worked with in a band, he had become clean and sober and had become a drugs counsellor. His words were "I've been waiting for this phone call Mick". Yes the game was really up. I was admitted into ADAS. An alcohol drug treatment centre, which ran a programme of recovery based on the Minnesota model of treatment (total abstinence) here over the next few months began my journey of change, being peeled like an onion, layer by layer, all the harms and hurts I had caused, a life story, a moral inventory, all to be written down and read before my peers in group.

The seeds of a new life were sown, and thus began re education, in the form of becoming a counsellor myself, I achieved an Advanced certificate in person centred counselling and began working at the same treatment centre with people like myself, alcoholics and drug addicts, people who were coming out of prison, I became skilled in referrals and working with probation services and running group sessions at the centre, the music facilitation was just waiting to happen and it did.

I then got the opportunity to set up and steer a creative arts group at the centre and there began person centred drumming and music, it was a perfect setting to gain skills and develop my passion which is now, becoming a qualified music therapist.

In 2003 I achieved a higher education qualification as a music facilitator, already having over forty years experience as a drummer/percussionist and teacher for twelve years, I followed my gut feeling one day and answered an ad for a young disabled man, requires music support person...I have never looked back since.

A meeting with the head of disability database in Stockport, lead to an article being produced in an NHS newsletter, the article that was to open the door of opportunity, and for parents of children who perhaps need intervention with their disabilities, I now work with three boys who are dyspraxic, three young people with cerebral palsy, a young man in palliative care who suffers with encephalitis, carry out workshops with downs syndrome babies and mums groups, and have recently been able to take part in observation sessions at the CDU within Stepping Hill hospital in Cheshire, involving speech and language development with very young children which also led to future possibilities of continued work with the NHS.

So the journey continues and the privilege of being able to make changes and bring some happiness into the hearts of these special people goes on, I now look to fresh horizons to seek out more education and understanding of how to use music to create change.

I thank God for the gift he gave me, and for the privilege of being able to use it.

Michael Gilbourne.