

SCA DC NEWSLETTER

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By SCA Metro DC Intergroup

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My Story (Part One)

By Jim P.

I grew up in Northern Virginia. I was the middle child of four. Both my parents loved me. However, my mother suffered from depression and my father had anger management issues. Based on how they were raised, I believe both my parents carried shame. My siblings and I would hear my father ask and demand sex from my mother. My father would say to her over and over: "Can't we go to our marital bed? Why won't you go to our marital bed?" She would almost always refuse. When I was 11, I caught them having sex. It was awkward for me and even more so for them. We didn't talk about it though.

When I was eight, I had sex with another boy my age. I had no concept of sexual orientation then. Though no one told me, I knew that it must be hidden, so I closed the blinds and locked the door. When I was asked by my mom what we were doing, I knew enough to lie. My best friend growing up was extremely effeminate and was teased constantly by others who used anti-gay epithets. I must have been in denial because I never thought about him in that way.

I was a late bloomer and became interested in sexuality around age 16. I learned about the concept of masturbation from the Encyclopedia Britannica (yes, really!) and I had to practice to figure out how it worked. I soon developed Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), which included thoughts and actions about ejaculation. During the summer break, life with my friends and siblings revolved around the swimming pool. I thought that after masturbating I would get a woman pregnant even though I never had intercourse with a woman. I told myself over and over again (to no effect whatsoever) that after masturbating my semen would dry up; that if I was to use soap and water in the shower it would wash away; that if I entered the pool the chlorine would kill it. Nonetheless, this was not enough to satisfy my OCD. I stopped going to the pool, even when asked by my best friend. Since I couldn't tell anyone the real reason, I stopped being friends with my best friend. My life would never be the same. This would greatly affect my mental health and contribute to my eventual sex addiction.

I was painfully shy and hoped that other teens would come up to me to be friends. This didn't happen. I had no friends and was alone for much of my high school. This was especially painful at lunch because I had no one to sit with. My loneliness continued

continued on back

Dual Addictions

By Ethan T.

I should have known that I had a problem with drinking and sexual compulsion when I cavalierly groped a woman's breasts on the way home from a fraternity party almost 22 years ago. The pathetic and somewhat ironic thing about the situation was that: 1) I'm not sexually attracted to women; and 2) I was too drunk to remember what I had done.

Much to my chagrin, the woman pressed charges against me and I was found guilty of sexual assault by a peer-run judiciary committee and placed on academic probation for one year. In hindsight, this humiliating incident was undoubtedly the beginning of my long, tumultuous, and often unmanageable downward spiral with dual addictions.

As a closeted gay man attending a fairly conservative university, I often drank to excess to escape the daily pain and turmoil that I experienced as a young adult. I was constantly surrounded by handsome, clean-cut men and yet I always had to pretend that I was attracted to women. My presumably straight male friends expected me to date women and I never failed to disappoint them with my plethora of attractive girlfriends. But the only way I could bring myself to be with them sexually was to drink, and drink, and drink some more.

During this time, I also started to respond to ads for men in the local classifieds. I was terrified that someone would "out" me, but my desire to be with men overshadowed any perceived risks and I started hooking-up with other closeted men on a fairly routine basis. These clandestine encounters occurred without the benefit of the Internet so I never knew who, or what, I was getting until we actually met in person.

Needless to say, I met several men to whom I was not at all physically or emotionally attracted. However, I did not have the courage or heart to ever walk away, so I had sex with them anyway. These furtive hook-ups perpetuated my feelings of low self-esteem and reinforced the notion that I was not worthy of being truly loved. Meanwhile, I drank, and drank, and drank some more.

I finally mustered up the courage to come out of the closet while doing volunteer work in rural Panama. The outpouring of unconditional love and support that I received from

continued on back

SCA NEWS & EVENTS

My Story continued

and got worse at college because I no longer had my family with me. At college my OCD intensified and I became afraid of using a washer and dryer for fear of impregnating a woman.

During summer before my junior year, I went to Ecuador on an anthropology/biology trip. We had to be careful with what we ate in order to prevent digestive problems. Upon coming back to the United States, I couldn't readjust. Over the course of my junior year, I became obsessively concerned with what I ate and drank. I thought certain foods and drink would make me vomit. I would carry a plastic bag around with me in case I felt like I had to vomit during class, which was my biggest nightmare.

My roommate at the time, who was assigned to me since I didn't have any friends, came back after the Thanksgiving holiday with a stomach virus. This opened up a whole new field of severe anxiety about vomiting. By February of my junior year I was down to what I considered safer foods, which were ten saltines a day and a half glass of ginger ale. I was down to 120 pounds.

One day I accidentally dropped my hairbrush in the toilet. I picked it out before thinking what actually happened. As a result, I ended up washing my hands hundreds of times. My anxiety was so great, and couldn't be relieved by hand washing, that I went to the campus health clinic. I was then referred to mental health counseling on campus. I finally met with a counselor and opened up about my anxiety and OCD. She began asking me about my background. When asked, I told her I had no friends or a girlfriend. She then asked if I was gay. I said no, I didn't think so. After the visit my mood severely deteriorated. The OCD was relentless. I became suicidal and started thinking about what I wanted to wear at my funeral. I told my counselor about my suicidal thoughts and she referred me to an off campus psychiatrist. The new psychiatrist hinted that the form my OCD took might symbolize something. I immediately thought it had to do with my sexuality.

Because of my suicidal ideation, I was admitted to a psychiatric hospital for seven weeks. I was put on OCD and depression medication. With encouragement from the staff, my diet was expanded and I gained weight. I stopped feeling suicidal and gradually, with my therapist's help, began to explore my sexual orientation.

I told my parents I was gay the morning I was leaving to go to my senior year of college. The two questions they had were: 1) how do I know and 2) would I be physically safe from harm? They begrudgingly accepted my sexual orientation.

To be continued...

Dual Addictions continued

my friends and family was overwhelming. No longer was I going to be ashamed of my sexual orientation. Nor was I going to continue to pretend to be sexually attracted to women in order to maintain a facade that was literally eating my soul alive.

Once I returned home to the States, I felt a nagging urge to "make-up" for lost time. As a result, I spent inordinate amounts of time, energy, and resources looking for sex with other men. As much as I convinced myself that I wanted a steady, monogamous boyfriend, I could never seem to date anyone for more than a few months at a time. Indeed, I was never completely satisfied with the men that I dated. For reasons unbeknownst to me at the time, the novelty and thrill of the relationships always seemed to quickly wear off and I was soon back on the prowl looking for my next tryst. Not surprisingly, these failed relationships caused me to want to drink, and drink, and drink some more.

I met my beloved husband on January 23, 2003. I had finally found the man of my dreams and there was *no* possible way that I was going to continue on with my compulsive, unhealthy sexual behaviors. Or so I thought. I won't go into any of the details, but suffice it to say, I acted out on numerous occasions throughout our relationship.

My world came crashing down around me in early December 2008, when I was arrested for Driving Under the Influence. To make matters worse, I was acting out with my friend and neighbor at the time of my arrest. I spent that night in a county jail cell with a bunch of fellow drunks and ultimately shelled-out more than \$10,000 on car repairs and attorney's fees. I also lost my driving privileges for one year, not to mention my pride and dignity.

But as much as I hated to admit it at the time, that was exactly what I needed to finally get my life back in order. It took me several more weeks, and lots of guilt and shame, to eventually admit to my husband what I had done. Thankfully, he made an unconditional commitment to stick by me through my recovery. I went to my first S-meeting on December 31, 2008, and I have been coming back ever since! I also gave up drinking the night of my accident and I am proud to say that I have been completely sober for more than 17 months. I have two wonderful sponsors and I'm slowly but surely working through the steps—all while successfully raising our precious (not to mention precocious) two-year old daughter.

I'll be the first to admit that I have had the occasional slip-up in my S-program. However, when I look back at how unmanageable my life had become, I realize just how much progress, albeit incremental, I have made. I feel so incredibly blessed and grateful to have found these rooms. I would not wish either of these addictions on my worst enemy but I can honestly say that I am a better, richer, and happier person as a result of my arduous journey. And I'll definitely keep coming back!