

Kavon's Story

I started using drugs at an early age, when I was 15 years old. What started out as experimentation soon became a regular event. At first, I would get high on the weekends, then almost every night, and I would attend school under the influence. This continued throughout my college and early working years.

I was a fairly accomplished guitar player and in my early 20s, I began to play professionally. I found myself working in environments where drugs and alcohol were an easily accepted element of a musician's lifestyle. Consequently, my drinking and drug use accelerated dramatically.

Entering my 40s, I got married and started a family, which tamed my self-destructive behaviors to some degree. I got a professional job while helping to provide for my family and raise my children. However, I never felt quite comfortable and demonstrated all of the signs of depression. My drinking began to accelerate again and soon I was getting high or drunk nearly every day and night. The next several years, I found myself in and out of rehab. I lost a job that I loved and ended up getting a divorce. It was determined that I suffered from major depression and anxiety.

Key Tip: Establish a strong relationship with your provider

I went to one session with three or four different therapists before I found someone with whom I was comfortable. I needed to feel like they had experience and valuable insights about my situation. If I didn't feel comfortable after the first session, I would seek out a new provider.

Finally, I found an excellent counselor and got sober. It was a long road back, living in a halfway house, a supported living environment, and finally on my own. My path to wellness was not without roadblocks and setbacks, but I have been persistent in doing the things necessary to live with my addiction and mental illness. I continue to work with my counselor who helps me to set goals and has encouraged me to journal. I also participate in support group discussions, like Alcoholics Anonymous. Today, I have a steady, satisfying job. My relationship with my children and their mother is very good and I am living independently and responsibly.

Kavon's Self-Management Strategies

- **Support Groups:** One of the things that helped promote my recovery was attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. At these meetings, I discovered several resources that helped me stay sober and provided me with a network of supportive individuals.
- **Gratitude List:** One of my daily activities is to write a gratitude list that helps me focus on the positives in my life. There is something about writing that helps me think of more positives in my life to be grateful for. Visit the website for the Greater Good Science Center, Berkeley's scientific research center that studies social and emotional well-being, where you can learn more about the tips for keeping a gratitude journal: http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/tips_for_keeping_a_gratitude_journal