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KNOW YOUR WHY!

**ONE PERSONS RETROSPECTIVE ON MISSED PREVENTION
ONE VITAL KEY TO DEMAND REDUCTION**

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Know Your Why!

REALLY? Almost 7 years into recovery and waking up this morning crying, feeling such sadness, grief, and heartache for not only what I have lost but the damage and the harm I have caused to myself and others.

Choosing to use drugs from the age of around 14 which, was prompted by people, I both loved and trusted, and was the beginning of a journey into decline I could not have imagined.

When the perceived 'grownups around me were modelling and promoting the 'fun times' choice, and the 'we do it all the time, look at us, we are ok, trust us' meme; like so many anchorless teenagers who have been told 'you've got-a-clue' and don't have to listen to the oldies, I chose – but it was a very bad choice.

However, in reality I truly had no clue – none at all, except the bravado that comes from being a stereotypical know it all adolescent, wanting anything and everything my own way. You see part of getting a real clue on anything important, is knowing 'why'. If you do not have a defendable and sustainable 'why,' you are just 'fodder for the system'. In other words, whatever environment you are in – good, bad, or ugly – will influence your decisions.

Me at 14 being anchorless, left me wide open for the 'whatever' or 'why not' default position that was placed in front of me, resulting in me making a very uniformed decision.

Choosing to pick up and put mind altering poisons into my body resulted in 30 years of active addiction and believe me when I say, becoming an addict was not a life goal or even on my radar at all. I did not jump out of bed one morning and think to myself, *hey, I might just become a drug addict, like how cool would that be, yay!*

However, I did choose recovery and my most challenging days, like today, attempting to identify the triggers and to regulate the

emotions I am feeling, are far better than those lonely and miserable days in active substance addiction.

Through healthy support networks such as family, friends, mentors, and the *Recovery Alumni*, I am now able to be vulnerable, honest and share my lived experience and hard earned resiliency with others.

“Quick get her out of the car, there is smoke”

One would have thought after being involved in a near fatal car crash for which, I was at fault with a blood alcohol reading of 0.174 and copious amounts of other drug residue in my body (easier to say the only substance I did not have in my body was heroin) would have been my last hoorah! Sadly, as so often the case with addicted individuals, I was to use alcohol excessively into black out on several occasions with still more negative consequences.

help me’. I just knew, and I had known for some time that I was going to die if I did not stop – or worse; I was going to kill someone else.

I’m not going to bang on about what I did and didn’t do in my utterly toxic personhood wrecking journey, but I do want my ‘lived experience’ and some ridiculously hard-won earned resiliency to make a difference – and not just the cheesy ‘redemption’ stuff either, but to help people, but particularly young people, get what I didn’t and wish I’d had – what I needed and how I could have chosen better.

When I was first referred to a person of ‘lived experience’ I thought to myself that it was kind of cool, until I realised for me this was simply an identity enhancer and fed my ego for a time. The term ‘lived experience’ seems to me to have become somewhat of a celebrity status, with those like me, being ‘celebrated’ for choosing recovery, helping others, or being ‘admired’ for escaping addiction.

I am certainly no celebrity and there was no glory in active addiction or the outrageously inappropriate behaviour and untold harms and carnage that I have caused.

Alcohol and drug addiction stole my childhood, womanhood, dreams and aspirations, relationships with family, genuine friendships, and any ounce of passion I had for life. The long term damage and harm that I have caused myself on both a psychological and on a cellular level are the scares that I continue to bare from my 'lived experience' which is far from glamorous.

The shift, however; let me tell you is possible, to live a life in recovery, live a meaningful life with purpose and now my passion has switched from self-indulgent toxic poison to prevention, to build fences of protection and not just drive ambulances to clean up the mess. The Dalgarno Institute is one place I am able to add value to a culture and generation. Help build resilient and healthy communities that enhance and do not diminish the potential of Gen Now.

The old statement, 'prevention is far better than cure', is such a super understatement when it comes to the drug space.

If I could change only one thing, just one thing about my life, it would be working early to pin down my 'because', so I make decisions, they don't make me! Right along with that I would learn the incredible value of one simple word 'No'. Afterall **No** is not only an immensely powerful word; **No** is a lifesaver and one that caring and supportive people empower you to use.

Entering and exiting addiction is a choice, believe me I know, addiction is toxic and a human misery, so know your 'why' and choose wisely!

Tracey Butler – Dalgarno Institute Board