

## PE1651/SSSS

Mike Thomas submission of 23 January 2018

I was first introduced to benzos through my doctor, I was prescribed diazepam for severe alcohol withdrawal back in 2014. They were the 2mg tablets two to be taken 3 times a day, at the time I was squatting in a flat and waiting for my benefits to be reinstated so I couldn't get hold of any alcohol short of stealing it for two days. Low and behold it did chill me out and I actually enjoyed the not drinking part for those two days. After that I had mentioned to a friend that I had tried diazepam and how it worked wonders! he then told me he knew someone who could get hold of them or was selling there prescription If I was interested? But these were 10mg I thought to myself 'If the 2mg worked like a magic wand then the 10s must be the magic' I was right, one 10mg tablet cured my depression because i could sleep when I liked, it cured my withdrawals, it gave me a pretty good buzz too. I stuck to just the 1 a day and managed to decrease my alcohol intake for about a month but as life tends to do got in my way and I thought again 'if all that good stuff happens just taking the 1 it will be amazing if I do two in the morning...you know to get started in the day then two in the evening to sleep...' all the while my drinking was increasing again. I had also been turned on to other benzos and would regularly ask for a even stronger list to try like ativan, xanax, and subutex. Fast forward to 2015, I had realised I could buy them off of the Internet at a way cheaper price and pay for it by supplying others in the same way. At this point I was in touch with the local mental health teams and alcohol services, I didn't mention the benzos because 'they are prescription drugs right?' I wasn't worried at all that I has upped the dose to about 50/60mg a day! I had also discovered they were the 'magic wand' for hangovers...comedown's...headaches pretty much anything that was wrong with me so in fact I was probably taking 80mg+ EVERY DAY. It was a routine doctors apointment that I required antibiotics for something that I mentioned that I was taking them, the conversation soon turned dark and the doctor started talking to me and acting like i was a junky he advised that I stop taking them immediately and come back once i was Finnished on the antibiotics. So a bit shaken up I went home and didn't take any more pills. Needless to say I didn't sleep that night, and any sleep I did get I started getting g woken up by my body jolting me awake. Annoying, so the next day where I would normally have taken 2/3 10mg I took none and started drinking at the normal time I would have. But as soon as I did I had to go to the toilet....I can only discribe the diahriah as explosive! It felt like stomach acid very unpleasant although I was used to the runs because I have been an alcoholic since I was 18. The alcohol I was consuming no longer did the trick. (I was on 8, 5.8% cans a day) so I found myself drinking more again. That night I soon found out what I had feared I had Googled some symptoms because I thought I had a cold or flu I was burning up, vomiting, cold sweats, the constant jolting of my body....I was having withdrawals from not only the alcohol that wasn't working but the pills. As soon as I took 20mg within 15 mins I was feeling better, I thought that doctor was right I was a junky! Fast forward again to the beginning of 2016 I was trying to get my mental

health in order at the same time as sorting my alcohol out and now I had this pill problem too! I had brought it up with my alcohol worker and they were less than helpful telling me that I only really had one option and that was to taper off of the pills and up my drinking to balance it out....the mental health team were telling me I needed to stop drinking to be able to treat me so I was in a bit of a catch 22. I managed to get my pill habit down from about 110mg a day to about 50 in the next few months, sat alone in my flat for days with stomach cramps, insomnia terrible anxiety, and depression. But I had got there. A relapse at a music festival where I blacked out and fallen down a tide break into the ocean and a accidental overdose of "red devil xanax" 20mg and 50mg diazepam on top of a days worth of drinking and a seizure I decided to reach out and see if the drug and alcohol service could help me safely kick the habit for good. I was met with the attitude that basically I got myself into this mess and I have show that I can reduce so what's the problem stopping me go the rest of the way? I'm pretty impatient as it is so thought ypu know what? I'm just going to quit myself....and dear God, I was the worst feeling I had ever been through. My skin was always hot, prickly and itchy, the stomach cramps were back with a vengeance and the diahriah was ridiculous. I was vomiting at the slightest thing which meant it was difficult to keep down the alcohol I needed to stay ok with that. I couldn't sleep because the jolting was so bad it felt like every muscle was twitching at once! I was wetting the bed and not even realising it this persisted for about 4 days and the main part of the withdrawals had stopped I went to my gp and i was turned away saying there was nothing they could prescribe me to make it at least a bit more bearable that wouldn't make it worse. But after a long nearly 2 weeks I had started to feel a bit "normal" but my alcohol intake was through the roof again. Which has now taken me nearly another year of waiting, being messed about and frustration to fix...I have now been a month and 2 weeks sober and nearly 2 years clean of all drugs!