Celebrating Sobriety

Annette Bowen

Some people celebrate birthdays, wedding anniversaries, graduations, and holidays. On the ninth of every month, I celebrate freedom from the grips of crack cocaine.

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I’ll never forget the weather that day. It was hot and humid. My son and daughter were staying with friends, which left me home alone. My plan was to get high and “chill” for the remainder of the day. But as fate would have it, plans changed. The crack I smoked had an adverse effect on me. My mind turned into one giant jigsaw puzzle and none of the pieces fit together. I was frightened, and that’s an understatement. The room was spinning, breathing was hard, and I began to hyperventilate.

What occurred after that is a blur. The next thing I remember, I was sitting in the back of a police car. The young officer knew I was high. For some reason, thank God, he did not arrest me. After giving me a stern lecture, he released me and told me to go inside and get myself together.

Hitting rock bottom is an extremely sobering thing. For the first time since I began my descent into the abyss of drugs and alcohol, I saw what I REALLY looked like: an empty shell of a woman with sunken eyes, protruding ribs, and thinning hair and bald patches due to my drug use.

Saved by Prayer and Writing

I’ve always believed in the power of prayer. I knew if God delivered me from the grips of crack cocaine, I’d never use again. I’m proud to say, it’s been 22 years since I last smoked crack.

I also use words as a battering ram against addiction. Writing was the catalyst that launched my imagination to another dimension; it was therapy when withdrawal symptoms crept up on me. There was a tremendous amount of negativity rattling around in my head that needed to be emptied out and replaced with positive affirmations. That’s why writing was such an outlet for me. Words freed me from the self-imposed “jail” of drug and alcohol abuse.

Now that my mind is clearer and I’m able to put more than one thought together, my fondness for writing has grown. Every month on the ninth, I write something uplifting and celebrate another month free from the dismal grip of crack cocaine.

Annette Bowen is a student at Literacy Action Atlanta in Atlanta, GA. She is a mother, grandmother, and novice writer. Her favorite quote is by Dr. Maya Angelou: “You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them.”

Read pp. 8-9. What is similar and what is different in the two stories?

Get help for addiction. Explore <find-treatment.samhsa.gov>. Besides helping you locate a drug treatment program, what other resources does this website offer?