

BREAK THE ICE



My life changed in a second

'Try it, love

IT'LL HELP YOU

They were the words that sent my life spiralling out of control

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I'd never imagined starting over. Married for 22 years and with two grown kids, I thought that was me. But when my marriage broke down, I found myself leaning on an old flame, John, for support. He was handsome and charming and I fell for him fast. Within weeks, I'd quit the beauty salon where I worked and packed my bags to move to Melbourne to be with him. It was my second chance at love and I grabbed it. It was hard leaving the kids but, aged 19 and 21, they understood. One day, John took me out for a drive. "Let's have some fun!" he said.

As we cruised around the Melbourne streets with the music blaring, I felt like a teenager again. Then we pulled up outside a fancy hotel. "Surprise!" he said, smiling. As we strolled hand-in-hand to our posh room, I couldn't believe my luck. Inside, John poured us a glass of wine and lit candles. Then he pulled out a pipe with small crystal shards inside. Shocked, I watched as he took a puff. I'd never seen him smoke before and had no idea what it was. "Try it, love," he said. "It'll help you relax." I'd tried marijuana when I

was younger but never anything else. I wasn't convinced. "I look alright, don't I?" he said. "Trust me." Eventually, I agreed. Taking the pipe, I inhaled the smoke. Straightaway, I felt an overwhelming sense of pleasure. I felt light, carefree and sexy.

"Shocked, I watched as he took a puff"

We had a wild night of passion together. It was amazing. "It's a sexual stimulant," he said. A week later, he pulled out his pipe again. "Want another go?" he said. Now I knew I could handle it, I wasn't worried. "Sure," I said. Like before, we shared an intimate night together. After smoking, we were carefree and fun. It was so sexy. Before I knew it we were

smoking it every few days. Sometimes we'd smoke John's car, other times we'd it at home and have wild s After, we'd sleep for days. Soon I realised I felt anx and depressed when I was smoking. Gone was the in calmness, now I craved my next hit so much I'd pick a the tiny hairs on my face a legs until I was sore. The only time that feelin went was when I was high. Things escalated. I lost a interest in finding a new jc and refused to leave the h for days on end. I'd always made sure I ke in touch with the kids by phone, but I started to feel uneasy about making the c "I think the house has be bugged," I told John one ni Coming off highs I felt d alone and confused. The savings I had were s gone. Desperate, I pawned



Me partying hard

RELAX

jewellery and took out credit cards. When they all maxed out I decided to sell my car. After a year, my life was almost unrecognisable. That's when John told me we'd been smoking crystal meth - also known as ice. Still, I kept in touch with my family but I never told them what a mess I was in. Somehow, John managed to hold onto his job. He'd work during the day, then he'd come home and we'd get high together at night. It still wasn't enough. We were spending thousands each week and drowning in debt. I'd lost all sense of time, reality and logic, too. One day, I found myself staring at a single tree from day to night. I even overdosed when I mixed ice with the party drug GHB. John managed to stop me from slipping away by slapping my face over and over.

Looking in the mirror, I barely recognised myself. I was thin, pale and covered in scabs. My once thick and shiny hair now had bald patches. Bursting into tears, I called a drug helpline. But when I couldn't string together any words I just hung up and reached for the pipe. Life carried on like this. We'd steal food and toilet paper to get by. One day I got lost going for a walk around the corner. With no idea where I was or how to get home, I sat helplessly on the cold concrete and bawled my eyes out. I'd hit rock bottom. Looking up, I realised I was sitting on a church step. I'd never been religious but I knew then things had to change. I feel like it was an intervention from God. Once, I'd had a home, a good job and was a mum to my two kids. Now I was a junkie. With just \$76 to my name, I was broke and up to my eyes in debt. Looking online, I saw a flight to the Gold Coast was exactly \$76. It was a sign. I booked the ticket and called Mum. "I'm coming home," I said. At the airport, Mum walked straight past me. "Mum, it's me!" I said, running after her. She looked at me and burst into tears. "What happened to you?" she said. Back home, I told her all about my life hooked on ice. "That explains why you fell off the map," she said. I looked at her confused. I'd thought I'd been phoning her and the kids regularly, but it had all been in my head. They'd not heard from me in months. "I'm so sorry," I cried. Weighing just 41kg and living back at Mum's, I began the slow process of getting my life back on track. "We'll do everything we can to help you," my kids said when I saw them. It was emotional and for



I had to sell my car

weeks I was crying as I fought my cravings. But I started seeing a counsellor and spent hours each day writing a journal. Anytime I got a craving for ice I thought about everything I'd lost. It kept me focused. John tried to contact me, but I told him I never wanted to see him again. I've now been clean for three years. I'm slowly climbing my way out of the \$75,000 debt I racked up and am now working on my project, the Australian Anti Ice Campaign. I'm visiting schools to teach them about the dangers and help other addicts like myself. One moment of weakness was all it took for it to turn my life upside down. But I'm proof you can beat it and I'm determined not to let others fight it alone.

Living back at Mum's place



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GET HELP!

- Australian Drug Information Network - www.adin.com.au
- Australian Drug Foundation - www.druginfo.adf.org.au
- Youth Drug and Alcohol Advice Service - www.yodaa.org.au OR 1800 458 685

Share your story

If you or a loved one have battled ice addiction, tell us your story so we can share it with others.



I'm clean and happy now