

## Niki's Story

**Niki:** I got into drugs when I was about fourteen years old. Mostly started at school, um, with a lot of people around me smoking weed and stuff like that.

Smoking weed was my starting drug and I started to take other stuff like Speed and ketamine and stuff like that which are more serious.

School didn't.. They couldn't really do anything about it; they didn't know what they could do because I was way out of hand, way out of control.

They were worried, I could see it in their face, they were worried. But there wasn't a lot they could say to me, I didn't care.

I had very low self esteem; wasn't happy with the way I looked, the way I spoke. Everything, I just hated myself that much, but I didn't want to be me anymore and I didn't have to be me; I could be this other person.

I was taking drugs every day; I wanted to forget what was going on, at home and what I had to go home to. It was like a war zone really.

(Sound of footsteps and door slides open.)

**Lucy:** 'Hello Niki!'

**Niki:** 'Hiya, how're you?'

**Lucy:** 'I'm alright thanks, how are you?'

*Voiceover: Niki's battle with addictions was usually aided by the special report she developed with her worker, Lucy.*

(Muffled voices.)

**Lucy:** I met Niki, um, probably about a year and a half ago and at that time Niki was using quite heavily and she was a very different person to the one I know today (slight laugh)

**Niki:** We clicked, we got on really well.

**Lucy:** I can't put my finger on the thing which made us get on so well but Niki is a really vibrant young woman, she's really easy to talk to, she's really reflective and she engages really well with worksheets and just exploring how she's feeling and she's also very good at telling me when we're getting too close, so, Niki kind of told me what I need to do and that is the ideal situation really; when she knows what she needs and I can come in and, kind of shape it around those needs.

**Lucy:** 'You said that, um, you're mean when you're drinking and you're going to drink when you're eighteenth so how're you going to make sure you don't become mean then? What's the difference?'

**Niki:** 'Well then I was just drinking excessively'

**Lucy:** 'Okay'

**Niki:** 'To the point where, you know, walking down the road was a problem.'

**Niki:** She listened... She listened, I think, she listened to, you know it was a lot to do with me feeling really down because stuff which had happened and not wanting to feel that way and not wanting to feel down because I didn't like it.

You know, sort of talking out all of my problems before even beginning to think about, you know, staying off of drugs. It was, sort of, dealing with the underlying problems first which would then lead to staying off of drugs and alcohol.

**Lucy:** For me it's just really important to find out what the young person wants and sometimes I can be sitting with feelings of 'Oh my God what you're doing is so dangerous, I want you to stop!' But if I express that then, then they're not going to be interested anymore because that's not their goal, um, and they've probably experienced that from other adults who're having that anxious reaction.

**Lucy:** 'And it wasn't alcopops you were drinking before was it?'

**Niki:** 'No, 70cl bottle of Vodka' (uneasy laugh)

**Lucy:** 'That'll do it. That'll do mean!'

**Niki:** 'Yeah, that'll, that'll make me mean'

(Light laughter.)

**Niki:** 'But, um, if I don't drink a lot then that won't make me mean.'

**Niki:** She talks to you on a level; she doesn't talk to you like a child, but yet she doesn't talk to you like an adult, because I wasn't an adult but yet I wasn't a child either.

(Muffled voices.)

**Lucy:** Part of the route is trying to establish what it is that they (young persons) don't like about their use what it is they do like and see how we can change it so they're getting what they like from it from safer things or safer ways of using and remove the things that they don't like about it.

**Lucy:** We know when people don't need us anymore because they tell us, you know they say 'I'm at a space where I feel I can manage this on my own' and that is, you know, that's a great moment because they're independent, they're in control and it means I've done my job well 'cause they feel equipped with the skills and the tools to manage any crisis that may come up.

**Niki:** It feels amazing to be drug and alcohol free. Stupid things like watching the Sun come up after not seeing it for eighteen months, two years. Not seeing it, not knowing it. Just things like that, looking at myself in the mirror and going 'actually you look alright today' rather than wanting something else.

You know, it's all about being content with yourself and if you can achieve that, I think you don't need anything else.