

JAYDEN'S STORY

So, my name's Jayden James Chin. I come from a family of 10 brothers and sisters, grew up with a big family orientated background. We're all very close as a tight group. We started out as Catholics going to St Mary's Church Cathedral as really young people and going to St Mary's Primary School. We then moved on out to Howard Springs where it was the bush area, so they call us the Bush Rats. And from there when I started to become a teenager, 13, 14 started to get introduced to alcohol and parties out there. I started going around drinking as per usual as a normal teenager would be interested in those things. And then we seen people smoking and thought it was cool, so we started smoking cigarettes thinking we're cool. Then we started seeing people smoking cones, taking illicit drugs and we thought well, what's that? Let's have a go at that while we're drinking.

So, it went from one thing to another and led me to the amphetamine use that I use today as I started when I was 16. I started on weed when I was 14 and that and had my first cone, MDMA caps and pills, cocaine, speed back in when I was that young, just going to parties, using it as moderation on weekends, going to school as usual we all did. We had a very structured life. Our father was a very strict person, so if we stepped out of line we got flogged. We were all - people like - child's like that which has bring me to the world very kind giving generous person I am today. Always looking out for others rather than myself wellbeing. Then I started when I was 16 using amphetamine and the high of that was 10 - 1000 times any better than all of the other drugs I've ever had so I thought to myself I don't need any of the other ones, this was the only one for me. So I've turned to that every time to suppress my pain or my issues. It used to be in moderation at the start going out with your mates on the weekends, working on cars, doing your usual things you do, going to work every week as you do or school, whatever the time is. And then it just went from one thing to another, and it became an addiction, an everyday thing that I wanted to turn to to suppress certain issues that I had which was losing a partner cheating on me at a young age, which was 17.

And then I got locked up when I was 23 in 2015 for driving under the influence, failure to obey police direction and spent four months, one week incarcerated, which taught me a lot. There was a lot of jail mentality talk about "We're going to do this, we're going to do that when we get out", all this stuff about I'm going to get a lot of this, I'm going to sell this on, I'm going to make this much money and I just brushed it off, that's not my life. I don't want that. So when I got out I asked my dad for help. He was a user as well at this time, he was still using at this time, but he supported me through it, and he took me to Banyan House Rehabilitation for assessment. I went in on a Monday for an assessment and then they rang me on the Thursday, and they got me straight back in and I went straight in. My dad kept me clean for those four days the whole time, even despite the fact that he was using he still kept me clean. And I was in there for not three months because I didn't think three months was long enough for me. I was in there for six months and then I thought I had the tools that I needed to go out to the wider community and live my life how I wanted to live my life.

I was seven years clean of all illicit drugs, all substance abuse, everything. So I never drank. I never smoked weed. I never smoke. I never had ICE. I never had any of that. I drank a few beers, that was the only thing which back then wasn't - never triggered me to - I was always going home every day. I had my partner, my little one. I was always going home and then we started to argue a lot because we were around each other every day, every single day. We did everything together. We spent more time with each other than - we never even spent much time with our families. So, one thing led to another. I said, "Look, I've got a job offering coming up down in McArthur River Mine", she wanted me to take this job offer, it's more money, we can set ourselves up, we can give ourselves a break, might be the break we need. So, I started going to McArthur River Mine and this is only a couple of years ago now, about four years ago in the middle of COVID, and as I was out at the mines she went behind my back and cheated on me. So that was a second time I had that.

I left her, started again. Was there for about, I don't know, about a month or two. Going to the pub every day drinking which then became a problem because then I started to think about the other substances. I was out at the mines drinking a lot more, not - my head wasn't at work. It was always on that, so I thought I became a hazard to the worksite, so I told the bosses that I'm going to hand my two weeks' notice in. "I'm not going to beat around the bush mate, I'm going to end up hurting someone on this site because my mind's not here, my mind's on there". And ended up throwing the towel in that one day at the pub and said, "Stuff it, I'll just have it once, she'll be right" and I went and got a pipe and that off my sister that was using at the time and one thing led to another. It was once here, once there and then once here, once the next day and then it led onto nearly every single day of the week, and I stopped working completely and I was using every day and wasn't really selling or anything like that. I just was going to use because I had money saved there for myself and spent all my saved money and time into the substance abuse, which has led me where I am today.

I got locked up last year for possession in - not last year, sorry, in 2022 in October, a couple of months after I was using and every day. And then from there I didn't want this life again, but I got straight back out, straight back around the same people and just got not strung along my own responsibility for my own actions. I know that from being seven years clean. You don't blame anyone else for your own worst - you're your own worst enemy at the end of the day. So, I strung along and I ended up using again and I've been using to the day I pretty well come in here, was three days before on the Friday about what 10 days ago now. I came in here, so I'd say about two weeks ago I was using, the last time I used and then I thought no, had enough. I need help and I rang my mum and told her "I want to go to AOD". I've been here once before and I'm back here again and looking to go to rehab again to see if I can find new tools to reintegrate to the wider community and go back to where I was doing, like I was for seven years clean and building my life again.

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So that's pretty well what it sums up as, everything that I've been through and that. So we've been - we used to race motorcross when we were younger. We used to play rugby. I'm a very sporty, physical person. I'm always a hands on with work. I'm not so really skilled in the computer side of things, but I'm trying to adapt to that lifestyle because I believe with my - if I do come clean and I do come a long way I believe I can help a lot of other people in this aspect.

That's awesome. And you've done it before. You've taken that step and clean for six/seven years.

Yeah. I've done it before, so it's - made me come a long, long way as a person of who I am. My mum tells me every day "I'm proud of you no matter what. You've done a lot. You are a kind heart giving person but it's time to start thinking for yourself and not for others first. It's time to put yourself first", which some people can say is selfish but, in a way, sometimes a selfish act can better you as a person and make you a better person and certain people can learn from this aspect. Because helping yourself first and finding yourself first as a person and who you are is better than trying to help someone when you're not the person you are. So I see it as a big thing.

It's just being strong in the recovery journey, it sounds like, standing up for yourself and what you want.

Yeah, that's right. Standing up for what's right and what's wrong in your opinions, in your aspects. Other people have what's right and what's wrong and their rights and wrongs are different to your rights and wrongs. Everyone has their own journey. Everyone, like you said, the author of their own book. They're writing their story. So at the end of the day, you got to learn from that and change it to the next chapter in your life. And that's how I see it.

What do you want to see? An ideal chapter ahead, what would you want to see?

I would want to see myself as the person I am becoming back of now and pushing towards eventually help others in this aspect of substance abuse because everyone has their own additions. You could be addicted to money. You could be addicted to love. You could be addicted to weights. But it's - if it's not affecting anybody then it's okay. But substance abuse to anybody affects everybody. So I see as myself I want to be a social worker or a key worker or some sort of practitioner of some sort to better people's lives and put them on the right path. And I feel like I have the skills and the knowledge to do that. I just need to find myself first as a person and reintegrate to the wider community back to work for a fair while then I will start studying to try and become that person. My mate has done it. My mate, we were mates since grade three in primary school. We were on substances for a long time together. He's been to jail here and he got out of that. He went to rehab, then he left to go to Queensland and now he's a social worker down in one of the rehabilitation centres helping others.

And I've only just spoken to him not long ago and he's doing very well. He hasn't used. He hasn't touched anything. He's looking very fit. He's going to the gym. He's changed his whole life. He's turned the page to the next chapter. So that's what I want to see. I want to see myself as someone like him. I see him as a role model. I look up to him as a friend, as a mate because he's made that change. I've made the change before but like I say, it's not a relapse, it's a lapse. I'm just lapsed back into a certain thing, and I want to break free from that lapse and be able to not have that in my life anymore and change - not change it for something else. Maybe if you say just exclude the substance abuse out of my life. And if I had to change it for something else, I would change it for sport. I would change it for going to play rugby back to going to rugby or motorcross for instance. I nearly broke my back once before, so it's a bit worrying and that. That's what I love doing. That's where my mind was. Always back then, it still is now. I love finishing. I love hunting. I love camping.

I'm a typical Territory boy. I've always been in the Territory. I might think about leaving Darwin and going to maybe Melbourne or Queensland to break free from the people that I have associated with for so long and I know. It's a big group here and they're very easy to access. So breaking free from that can potentially - I know you can find it anywhere but breaking free from that for me is a big factor in my own recovery because to me if I don't have those people that I know and someone I don't know is a different story. Because someone I do know it's easy to go "Hey mate, can I grab this?" and I don't know them I'm like "Who are you? No, I don't want to deal with you, don't worry about it. It's all good, see you later". I can break free.

There's not that trust there.

There's not the trust. Not the trust. I always, when I meet anybody, as yourself, I give that trust straightaway because you've got to give trust to be able to letting someone in and know someone. You can't just not, because if you don't - if you don't trust somebody straight off the bat to give them and let them earn that real trust and let them right in, you can let your walls down. I've let my walls down before and sometimes I've been burnt, sometimes I've found a friend, I've found a support. So no matter what, you weigh it up, it's still - it's a 50/50 chance no matter where - anywhere you go in life. So you're always going to have someone that's going to want to bring you down and you're always going to have someone that wants to bring you up, always. So you've just got to learn to choose who's the right person to bring you back up for.

It takes a lot of courage to have that trust and really appreciate it.

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Yeah, no, that's fine. I really appreciate you coming in and showing us this project and this - the Menzies Program. It's a major thing because like I said, I did a Smart Recovery Program after I left Banyan. So, I used to go back every Monday night after work, go in tell my story, get feedback from them how I'm going, where I am now, where I'm working. I've got a partner. I've got a little one on the way. All these things. It was always - all these big key factors that were coming in. And it was a lot of good constructive criticism as well: is that too much on your plate straightaway. Well, not on my - well, not really. To me it was a big factor of my support. That's why I was seven years clean, my baby girl was coming. It's a big thing. That changes your whole life. It goes from one end to another. It's like hang on I've got to settle down now. I can't go out and do what I want to do or think about what I want to do rather than my daughter. I'd rather be there for my daughter and go to work every day and know that she's got something behind her for when I'm not around anymore. That's what I was thinking like. And then all walls came crashing in when the partner did what she did, but - or ex-partner I should say. But you get that, you win some, you lose some and you learn from everything.

I know one of my major triggers is I've been cheated on twice and both times I've turned back to substance abuse because of it. So that's a major trigger for me. Going to pubs to drink is a big trigger. I can go home, and I can have a six pack every day and not worry about amphetamine, not worry about green or whatever. But I'm at an environment where everyone's partying, everyone's having a good time and they go "Mate, let's go get some stuff". It's like "Yeah, right, one won't hurt" and that's - she'll be right. That's the old saying "She'll be right". That's not right. That's - she won't be right. It's not right. It's wrong. Going home having a six pack like I used to with my family, feeding my animals and that, now for me that's right. For me that was the right thing to do. But for me to go to the pub and do that that was wrong because I am now where I am for doing that rather than going home. So a lot of people say "Pub's doesn't matter, we'll just brush it off", well, no you won't just brush it off because it turns into - one thing turns into one thing and another turns into another. It's the slow lead on effect. And everyone says you can learn from it though. Yeah, you can. You can learn from it, but do you have the right support there behind you? Are you using it in moderation? Are you physically abusing yourself with this substance? You weigh that up and you tell me. Eventually that substance gets the better of most people.

I'm not going to say all people because I've seen people cope and work and function all their life on it, but then I've seen other people just waste their whole life away and go towards that. And I will say in the statistic form that I've seen in with my own eyes, 80% of people turn towards the substance abuse and waste their life away, 20% are the people who are successful and can go live their life and their fine. They have a retirement thing and everything. These people don't. And if you weigh that up that's a major, major - from my eyes that's a major thing on the substance abuse, illicit drugs that bring most people's worlds down and they can't come back from that. A lot of people can't. And statistically scientific thing says if you don't get your act together by the time you're about 33, roughly, between that age and most - statistically on a statistics scale and you keep abusing it slips further and further away the older you get from there on in.

But if you don't and you change your life around that time and you start to better your life you will have a retirement and you will have a super fund. You will be able to live comfortably towards the end. Most people like that have that. But if you end up slowly drifting away 30, 40 - to 40 it drifts away from you. Every time you - every year you go without - you go without trying to change it skips further away. It's a major thing. And I'm 30 now, so I'm starting to think of that as a major factor. I've got to change. My daughter needs a future. She needs something there behind her. She might be able to build that for herself. She's - but at the end of the day I'd rather leave something behind than nothing. And I'd rather be there all the time than just some of the time.

It's a beautiful commitment, man, this next chapter that you've outlined. And you have some great connections around you, and I think some great ideas and ways of articulating it as well, like your way of speaking about it and thinking about it it's really - it's powerful.

Yeah. It is. It is powerful and I can see that. In my aspect - everyone has their own story. Everyone thinks - this bloke for instance on here, what will happen next? What's my next chapter? I don't know, but I'll figure that out and when I do, I'll find myself and then I'll go from there and I'll learn from mistakes. I'll learn from my success in these aspects, and I'll weigh out my success than my mistakes and I'll say, "I'll rather be successful than be burnt". And that's how I see it. I don't know how to see it any other way in life. You only get one life, so why not live it to the best of your ability rather than waste it away on the substance that you think might give you the ability to do whatever at that time. But once it comes to an end you feel miserable, you feel like why did I do that to myself? You've got no money there to support yourself, you just wasted it all on this one thing. And it's only last two, three, four days and then you're gone. Rather than "I've got this, I can last out a full fortnight before I get my next pay" and have food and everything on the table for me to have a roof to live under and everything.

When you had the substance abuse and that some of the time you become - things become unaffordable for you like rent, food and you turn to all these other avenues for help which is selfish in a way towards other people that actually really need those areas when you could be not using and abusing those substance and you could be spending your money wisely and actually having food on the table that you've paid for every week, that you've worked for, that you've earned rather than turning towards someone else for it. That's not fair on them and it's not fair on yourself.