

# Recovery: A Long Hard Road

by Cassandra Palmer



When you hear the phrase ‘drug-gie’ you most likely think of gang members, homeless people, or maybe even a certain relative. People involved with drugs are usually associated violence, certain races, and low income. Many fail to realize there is another large group of people that struggle with drugs. Some of the people most dependent on drugs do not live on the street, but in hospitals. Many people watch their lives come to a screeching halt as it becomes fully dependent on drugs. I was one of those people; for a month of my life, I relied on morphine just to make my days bearable.

I was recovering from two open-heart surgeries that had taken place over a period of two weeks. To keep the pain as low as possible, I had a morphine pump; when I started to feel uncomfortable, I would press a button and instantly

feel relaxed. I was receiving doses of morphine almost constantly; I could not go more than an hour without needing more. In the beginning, I relied on the drug solely to make the pain disappear, but later used it to make the time fly or just to take myself out of consciousness to escape the nightmare I was living. By the time I was ready to leave the hospital, I was fully dependent on the drug. I had had so many shots of morphine every day for a month, that coming off it was not easy. Instead of cutting down my morphine amounts slowly, the doctors took all the morphine away and I was forced to quit cold turkey.

Having to quit so abruptly made things very difficult for me. I had terrible withdrawal symptoms; I could not sleep, found myself in pain, often experienced tremors, and was often too cold or too hot. At one point, the symptoms became so great I returned to the hospital to receive one last dose of morphine just to be able to sleep. The symptoms did not last long, but the first few nights were intense. Not only was I dealing with coming off the drug, but also started experiencing the pains that the morphine had previously covered up. With my body feeling the way it was, I started to feel emotionally down as well. I had not expected any of this because none of my doctors had told me what would happen after I left the hospital.

In my mind, the whole procedure of getting me off morphine was not dealt with well. Even though it would have taken longer, I think

weaning off the drug would have been a much better approach. Coming quickly off a drug after being so incredibly dependent on it was too much for a recovering body to handle. Being taken off the drug slowly would have ensured that my already suffering body was as comfortable as possible. I would have been able to deal with the pain slowly coming on instead of being hit hard with it. Secondly, I never got a warning about what kinds of withdrawal symptoms I would experience after being cut off morphine. The doctors were so concerned with other things they failed to enlighten me with this information.

Having to be in the dark makes me think that the whole approach to the drug was handled incorrectly. Coming off a drug that strong is hard enough when you know what’s coming; facing everything without a clue as to what’s going on is even harder. I was only dependent on morphine for a month; many people live with drug addictions for years. So next time you hear about people struggling with drugs, give them a break; they’re in over their heads and are facing a long, hard road to recovery.

*The editors and staff of Alert Magazine are proud to congratulate Cassandra on winning the South Dakota scholarship and would like to encourage her to pursue her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to enter our essay contest.*  
*Sincerely, Alert Magazine*