



TESTIMONY

Hi my name is Lyall and I hope that I have your full attention because what I am about to tell you is not a fairy tale, but the truth of a scary reality.

I was arrested at the age of 19 shortly after I matriculated and I was released just less than two months ago at the age of 28. I have spent the last 8 years of my life in prison. Five of those years were spent in a maximum prison in Barberton, which is next to the Swaziland and Mozambique border. Even though I am on parole I am still under the rules and regulations of the department of corrections and under full house arrest until July 29, 2017.

I was always extremely very anti drugs because of my love for sports and always said that I would never do them, I didn't even smoke or drink. I was a provincial athlete having obtained my provincial colours for soccer, hockey, cricket and squash. I was also invited to play hockey for the Botswana national side. My hatred for drugs was of such an intense level because I knew that it was the one thing that had the power to take away what I loved, my sporting career.

In 1999 I moved from a private boarding school in Klerksdorp to a school here in Johannesburg, where I could live with my mother and finish my last 2 years of school. Being in a new school a person just wants to fit in and make friends, so 2 months into the year when the cool kids ask you to go out with them you don't say no, you quickly accept. While out I was offered a pill and due to fear of being rejected by my so-called new friends I accepted, telling myself only this

once what harm can it do? Little did I know it would only take that one wrong choice and pill to get me hooked, and a 3 year ban from my sports for testing positive for banned substances?

From that day on everything in my life would change drastically. I started to experiment with all kinds of different drugs from ecstasy, heroin, rocks, cocaine, etc. I have tried everything at least once but preferred to use the more commercial drugs of ecstasy and lsd. I used to take between 10 and 20 tablets a night, excluding whatever my other friends had brought. I moved up the drug world so quickly that before I knew it I was selling to the people who gave me my first pill. Not only that but I was also dealing at nightclubs and major events. I was everyone's best friend. I was also offered a lot of money to transport large quantities of ecstasy overseas.

Through all my drug abuse I never saw how my personality deteriorated. I became moody, skinny and got bad skin. I lost respect for my family but more importantly myself. I would never listen to reason to make any compromises; it was my way or no way at all. I was successfully tearing my family apart all by myself and I didn't care, because I had my so called druggie friends and that was all the family I needed.

In mid 2000 my mother found by accident some of my drugs, and when she confronted me I was high so there was no way of hiding it anymore and I was finally caught out. They wanted to send me to rehab but I played and their emotions and begged them not to send me and to give me a chance. So I was sent to the doctor who tested me and found I was near death. I stopped for about 2 months as I was subjected to random drug tests, but I soon found a way through that and started using again. I couldn't stop I loved that high and the sense of euphoria that came with it.

About a year later while in college I met a girl who bought drugs from me. We went to a club together and once we started using together everything felt right. She was beautiful and she abused drugs too, what more could I ask for. We became an item and for a while we abused drugs together, however due to drug related issues she was taken away and sent back to her father in Middleburg. I was devastated and vowed to get her back as her father wouldn't even allow us to phone or visit each other.

One day during a secret phone call she had come up with the suggestion of killing her father saying that it would be the only way for her to come back to JHB. To cut a long story short her father was killed in one of the most brutal and senseless murders Middleburg had ever seen. I see that man's face every night when I sleep, I live every day of my life knowing that I was responsible for being involved in taking man's life a burden I struggle to bear.

I lost everything due to drugs in 1 minute my friends; my families respect and trust, my youth and my freedom. Ironically enough none of the friends I had while I was dealing ever came to visit or phone me in prison, that's why there is a saying in prison that says, "When days are dark then friends are few". While in prison I also lost my father, cousin, gran and friends, I couldn't attend any of their funerals, not even my dad's. I have also lost my friends due to drug related instances.

I got a 15-year sentence of which I have already served 8 of those years inside prison and I still have to do another 7 on parole. I have spent the most exciting and developing stages of my life behind bars and all of this happened because of that decision I made to try that 1 pill to please those people who claimed to be my friends but deserted me when I needed them most.

So be honest to yourself. Never say never. Never say it will never happen to me and **never say just this once** because all it needs is once to make you an addict. Be wise because you all have your whole lives ahead of you, unless you want to end up like I did or worse. I'm not telling you to stop because no one can. I'm just telling you my story for what its worth. That I was once exactly where you are now thinking exactly the same thing you are, "**It will never happen to me" But it did.**