

I always had a tough time dealing with other people while growing up. I absolutely had no laid-out plan for what I wanted to do with my life—no goals, no dreams to be anything except maybe to have my own radio show. But that is the only thing I wanted out of life. I hated having to follow rules and I was very impatient trying to make things work out for the best. I've been hospitalized three times, all in 1994, and believe me, it was not fun. I took up drinking in local bars a couple of years prior to my hospital stay. I went off my medication whenever I felt good or skipped doses on days I would drink any kind of alcohol.

It wasn't until late 2015 that I finally quit altogether. One thing odd is that I never liked the taste of beer or liquor, but I would truly drink to be cool and accepted. I always loved being spotted with a tall glass of beer or wine. Twice I came very close to getting a DUI, but fortunately for me it never happened. I simply did not care over the years, and now I wish I had saved the money I made. I never gave myself much of a chance to succeed in anything until recently. I've lost count of all the different medicine I've been on over the last twenty-plus years.

There is something that happens to everyone while going through life, things that happen to them to change their lives forever. It wasn't until 1998 that my life, once again, seemed to make a turn for the better. That was one time I went off my medication, simply because I felt so much better without it. It wasn't doing me much good refusing to take the pills. Then, in 2004, I was off medicine for about 7 months. And since then, I haven't missed more than one day of prescribed pills. I finally reached the point in my life where I realized how much I need medication to help with my mental state. I can truly say that I've never felt better this year than any other. I am the leader of the local area Schizophrenics Anonymous, and I'm also active with the NAMI groups in Columbiana County, OH. Even though I'm experiencing what it's really like to be poor, somehow I am always able to stay positive and optimistic. Thanks to all my friends who were there for me the last dozen years or so. It really makes a difference getting support from peers. Staying active and busy throughout each day keeps me level-headed, and I'm grateful for everything that has come my way. The best is yet to come.

Todd

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