

Chapter One: The Journey Begins

I spent 45 years drinking. Not casually. Not socially. Drinking because it became the backbone of my days and the escape hatch from my nights. Drinking to silence memories. Drinking to numb pain. Drinking because I didn't know who I was without it. If you drink long enough, it stops being something you do. It becomes something you are. It becomes the wallpaper of your life. Always there, always calling, always whispering that you deserve a break before it boots you in the ribs again the next morning.

People imagine addiction as chaos. Broken bottles, fights, arrests, explosions. Truth is, most addiction looks nothing like that. It's repetitive. Boring. Predictable. Silent. It's waking up every day telling yourself today will be different and then drifting back into the same groove because your brain has been carved into a shape you can't see but still live inside. It's not drama. It's routine. A routine that slowly eats you alive while convincing you you're still in control.

When you drink for decades, your brain stops giving you options. It doesn't ask what you want. It follows the grooves you carved into it through repetition. This is addiction. Deep neurological tracks shaped by habit, coping, avoidance, fear and familiarity. I hadn't just carved a path. I'd carved a canyon.

The army taught me to endure anything. Pain. Fear. Cold. Chaos. But nobody teaches you how to face yourself when the noise stops. Nobody prepares you for the silence after service. The loss of structure. The absence of purpose. The identity drop. The disconnect from everything that used to define you. In that vacuum, alcohol becomes the easiest thing to lean on. It fills the space. It blurs the edges. It quiets what you don't want to feel.

I used it for everything. Stress simmering under the surface. Memories I didn't want to touch. Pain from my back, pain from my mind, pain from being human. Nights I couldn't sleep. Days I didn't want to be in my own skin. When I felt too much. When I felt too little. When I felt nothing at all. Alcohol was the answer I kept reaching for, even when I knew it was the thing destroying me.

Forty five years of that rewires your entire system. Your nervous system adapts. Your dopamine pathways adapt. Your identity adapts. Drinking becomes the default. So when people say things like just stop or use willpower, it's hard not to laugh. If willpower fixed addiction, none of us would be addicted. Addiction isn't a moral failure. It's a neurological loop. And loops don't break because you've decided they annoy you.

What changed for me wasn't a miracle moment. It wasn't a dramatic rock bottom. It wasn't a doctor warning me I'd die. I'd had all that. What changed was the realisation that I wasn't broken. My brain wasn't ruined. It was just wired in the wrong direction. And wiring can be changed. Neuroplasticity. A fancy word for something simple. The brain can change itself at any age. It can build new habits, new identities, new default settings. You can train it like a muscle. And after four decades of pouring poison down my neck, that truth gave me something I hadn't felt in years.

Hope. The gritty kind. The kind you earn. The kind you feel when you're sick of your own bullshit and finally ready to do something about it.

My first step wasn't heroic. It wasn't poetic. It was visualisation. Before I even knew the word. I didn't light candles or chant. I just sat there in the morning, half awake, and pictured myself sober. Not healed. Not perfect. Just sober. No hangover. No shame. No self hate. No waking up feeling like a hostage in my own life. I pictured myself walking, breathing, moving through a day without alcohol. That tiny mental image cracked the wall I'd lived behind.

Then came NLP. Not because I wanted to become some self help guru but because my thinking was feral. Years of internal dialogue like I'm a screw up, this is who I am, I'll never change. NLP helped me disrupt that. Catch the thought before it snowballed. Reframe it. Not in the cheesy affirmation way but in the honest way. I deserve better than this. I'm not doing another decade like this. I'm not letting my past dictate the next forty years.

Hypnosis changed things deeper. Not the comedy stage act. Real subconscious work. Quiet. Slow. Focused. It gave me the space to look directly at the reasons I drank without bolting. Trauma. Stress. Shame. Identity loss. Loneliness. Fear of feeling anything real. You don't heal what you refuse to face. And hypnosis gave me enough distance to stop running from myself.

Then mindfulness. Not the Instagram kind. Not pretending to float through life like a guru. Just noticing cravings instead of reacting like a machine. Instead of jumping the second the urge arrived, I sat with it. And when you sit with a craving and really look at it, you realise it isn't a monster. It's a wave. A ripple. I spent decades treating it like a tsunami. Turns out it was a temporary sensation I kept inflating to justify drinking.

Sobriety didn't come from one huge breakthrough. It came from a thousand small ones. Tiny decisions. Tiny interruptions. Repetition. Awareness. Brutal honesty. And choosing every single morning not to abandon myself again.

This chapter isn't about alcohol. It's about waking up. It's about reclaiming your life inch by inch. It's about understanding you don't have to stay who you were just because you've been that way for a long time. You can break it all down and rebuild it from the ground up.

I did. At 58. After 45 years drinking. With a prolapsed disc. Chronic pain. Trauma. Shame. Habits baked so deep they felt like personality traits. No rehab. No meetings. No labels. Just me deciding I was done letting my life shrink.

If I can rewire my mind after all that, you can rewire yours too. Your brain is not fixed. Your identity is not fixed. Your story is not fixed.

This is where the real journey begins.