

A narrative inquiry into the experiences of recovering drug addicts

by

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DECLARATION

I, Fatima Kurtha, hereby declare that this dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree MA: Counselling Psychology at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution. Where secondary material is used, this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with university requirements.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
ABSTRACT.....	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Research Question.....	1
1.2 Aims and objectives of the study.....	2
1.3 Structure of the study.....	2
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	4
2.1 Theoretical point of departure.....	5
2.1.1 A postmodern epistemological lens.....	5
2.1.2 Social constructionism.....	5
2.1.3 Theoretical application of epistemology to the present study.....	6
2.2 Contextualising drug consumption in South Africa.....	8
2.3 Exploring the concepts of addiction and recovery.....	9
2.4 Narratives and recovery.....	13
2.5 Meaning-making through narration.....	17
2.6 Conclusion.....	19
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....	20
3.1 Research design.....	21
3.2 The basic tenets of narrative inquiry.....	22
3.3 Research Methodology.....	23
3.3.1 Sampling.....	23

3.3.2 Research context.....	25
3.3.3 Method of data collection.....	26
3.4 Data analysis.....	27
3.4.1 Narrative-thematic analysis.....	28
3.5 Quality enhancement of qualitative research.....	30
3.6 Ethical considerations.....	33
3.7 Conclusion.....	35
CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....	36
4.1 The participants.....	36
4.2 Findings from the analysis.....	37
4.2.1 Transformative relationship with drugs.....	39
4.2.2 Growth following stagnation.....	42
4.2.2.1 Ibogaine – a catalyst in life restructuring.....	44
4.2.3 Power and control.....	46
4.2.3.1 Volition.....	49
4.2.4 Reconstructing identity.....	50
4.2.4.1 Love.....	51
4.2.4.2 Acceptance.....	56
4.2.4.3 Forgiveness.....	61
4.2.4.4 Role acquisition.....	64
4.2.5 Purposiveness.....	66
4.2.5.1 Faith.....	67
4.2.5.2 Altruism.....	70
4.2.6 Support as recovery capital.....	73
4.3 Conclusion.....	75

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	77
5.1 Reflecting on the study.....	77
5.1.1 Personal reflexivity.....	78
5.1.2 Epistemological reflexivity.....	80
5.1.3 Methodological reflexivity.....	81
5.2 Concluding statements and recommendations for future research.....	83
REFERENCES.....	86
Appendix A: Letter to rehabilitation centre and informed consent.....	104
Appendix B: Participant information leaflet and informed consent.....	108
Appendix C: Autobiographical narratives.....	112
Adam’s story.....	112
Estelle’s story.....	114
Miriam’s story.....	125
Appendix D: Interview transcriptions.....	135
Interview Transcript: Adam.....	135
Interview transcript: Estelle.....	179
Interview transcript: Miriam.....	254

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Phases of Thematic Analysis.....	29
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Narrative thematic map showing main and sub-themes.....	38
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ABSTRACT

In an effort to gain more insight into the subjective experience of recovery, and provide a platform for their voices to be heard, this research endeavour focuses on the storied-experiences of recovering addicts as conveyed through life narratives. Through the process of narrative reconstruction, the study will elucidate shifts in meaning-making. The study employed a postmodern social constructionist epistemological lens. Three recovery addicts were recruited from an Ibogaine-assisted rehabilitation centre. Narrative inquiry methodologically navigated this study. A qualitative methodological design was employed. Data was collected using written autobiographical narratives, and semi-structured interviews. Data was analysed using narrative-thematic analysis, which gave rise to six main themes and eight sub-themes. Recovery involved a reconstruction of identity which was informed by shifts in meaning related to love, acceptance, forgiveness, and the acquisition of and identification with new roles. Shifts within their relationship with drugs and the meaning they attached to the accompanying lifestyle, appeared to be vital reinterpretations in their journey. Communal and familial support was identified as a key source of recovery capital. The narratives reflected growth and reparation following addictive stagnation and destruction. Ibogaine was identified as a vital catalyst in the reconstruction of their life narratives. A renegotiation of power and control also informed the transition from addict to recovering addict. Volitional-change was an important feature. Faith and altruism served as important facets in constructing a purposeful recovery narrative. The study allowed for new insights into the experience and meaning of recovery from drug addiction, conveyed through rich idiosyncratic accounts.

KEY TERMS: Narratives; subjective experience; recovering addicts' narratives of addiction and recovery; meaning-making; reconstruction; Ibogaine-assisted rehabilitation; postmodernism; social constructionism; narrative inquiry, qualitative research; narrative-thematic analysis.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The stories we tell literally make the world. If you want to change the world, you need to change your story. This truth applies to both individuals and institutions.

(Michael Margolis)

A substantial amount of research into addictive behaviours is readily available (Walther, Morgenstern, & Hanewinkel, 2012; Webb, Michie, & Sniehotta 2010; West, 2006). The current store of research, however, is primarily quantitative and centred on clinical, theoretical, and economic notions and implications of drug abuse (Padayachee & Singh, 2003; Peltzer, Ramlagan, Johnson, & Phaswana-Mafuya, 2010; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2011).

This research endeavour is not intended to provide a causative or statistical analysis of addiction. The purpose of this research study, instead, is to move beyond this approach to addiction research and address a rather under-researched or scarce component of this topic, specifically within a South African context. This component is one that addresses the distinctive experiences and perceptions of recovering drug addicts as conveyed through their narratives.

In addition to investigating the impetuses that precipitate drug abuse, researchers (McIntosh & McKeganey, 2000, 2001; Taïeb, Révah-Lévy, Moro, & Baubet, 2008; Watson & Parke, 2011) advocate for addiction research to acknowledge the value of and explore the lived-accounts of individuals suffering from an addiction disorder, as well as the changes in their experiences that serve as a catalyst in the process of life reconstruction and recovery.

1.1 Research Question

The present study is concerned with describing and understanding the idiosyncratic experiences of drug addiction and recovery, and how the transitions within these experiences facilitate the construction of a narrative of recovery for the individual participants.

The key questions that will navigate this research endeavour are twofold. Firstly, how are the life narratives of drug addicts transformed and reconstructed through the process of recovery? Secondly, what are the shifts in meaning-making attached to the experience of addiction and recovery as conveyed through personal stories?

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the study

The present study aimed to provide a platform for the unheard voices of recovering drug addicts to be heard. The objective was to explore idiosyncratic storied-experiences of drug addiction and recovery from the person behind the drug, that is, the recovery experts themselves. In explicating the participants' narratives of recovery, the research intended to capture the transitions in meaning-making and reconstruction of the recovering drug addicts' life story.

Addiction research demonstrates how recovering addicts need narratives that make sense of past drug use and enable constructions of future, non-addict realities. Thus, alluding to the importance of narratives in the process of recovery (Anderson, 2015; Hänninen & Koski-Jännes, 1999; McIntosh & McKeganey, 2001). By employing a qualitative research approach to explore autobiographical narratives of the participants, the researcher intends to explicate the narratives behind the transition of the participants' lives. These autobiographies are intended to trace the transitions from their first encounter with a substance, to the motivations that precipitated their drug addiction, and the experiences of relinquishing their addiction and choosing a narrative of recovery.

1.3 Structure of the study

The following chapter begins with a discussion on the postmodern epistemological lens that guided this study, followed by its association with the social constructionist theoretical bedrock adopted. The chapter will then contextualise drug consumption within South Africa, before exploring the concepts of addiction and recovery. The chapter will conclude with an elucidation of literature on narrative work within the field of addiction research, as well as research on meaning-making.

Chapter three will elucidate the methodological endeavour pursued in conducting this study. This will include an explication of the qualitative research design, and the underpinnings of narrative inquiry. Aspects related to sampling, methods of data collection and analysis, as well as the research context, will be explored. The principles adhered to to enhance the quality of the study, and the ethical considerations will also be discussed.

Chapter four will embody an introduction to the participants before an in-depth discussion of the findings of this study.

Finally, chapter five will present the researcher's reflections and concluding comments. Incorporated into this discussion are the strengths and limitations of the study, as well as insights into and suggestions for clinical practice and future research.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature and Theoretical Framework

What is addiction, really? It is a sign, a signal, a symptom of distress. It is a language that tells us about a plight that must be understood.

(Alice Miller)

The chapter commences with a discussion on the epistemological lens through which the researcher approached this research endeavour. This epistemological lens informed the objectives of the study and the manner in which the researcher engaged with relevant literature, the participants, and their stories of experience.

South Africa appears to be suffering from a drug pandemic, with drug consumption being twice the world norm (Central Drug Authority, 2011). Substance use and abuse is considered to be a major public health problem, both internationally and in South Africa (Rassool, 2011; van Wyk, 2011). In this chapter, drug consumption in South Africa will be contextualised. The concepts of addiction and recovery will also be explored to understand the common discourses within this field that may influence the construction of recovering addicts' narratives of experience.

At the heart of human existence, lies the experience of meaning. Whether socially constructed through sharing of experiences, or introspectively interpreted, human beings attempt to make sense of their experience through the stories they tell and share as they journey through life. Narratives have been accepted as a particularly instructive method of studying the human drive for meaning (Taïeb, Révah-Lévy, Moro, & Baubet, 2008). Self-knowledge is considered to be created, organised, and stored in the form of narratives. This chapter will conclude with an exploration of meaning-making in relation to narratives, and more specifically, narratives of drug addiction and recovery.

2.1 Theoretical point of departure

2.1.1 A postmodern epistemological lens

This study employs a social constructionist theoretical framework. Social constructionism is rooted within a postmodern paradigm. Postmodernism represents a movement away from the homogeneous, singular, predictable, and objective characteristic of modernism. Instead, postmodernism embraces a social consciousness of multiple belief- and ideological systems which give life to multiple subjective realities (Mitchell & Egudo, 2003).

Postmodern thought disputes the existence of an absolute, universal, and objective reality or knowledge base. Instead, knowledge is believed to be shaped and formed relative to the specific context of language, beliefs, and values in which communities exist (Becvar & Becvar, 2003). People are seen to inhabit multiple and diverse realities that are socially constituted and embedded within a particular ideological and cultural milieu. This alludes to the postmodern belief of a social and linguistic construction of a perspectival reality (Anderson, 2007). Language is, therefore, seen as the fundamental means by which human beings come to know and simultaneously construct their world. In this way, postmodern philosophy is built on the relativity and subjectivity of knowledge construction (Patton, 2015).

2.1.2 Social constructionism

Social constructionism is grounded in the principles of postmodern philosophy. For the postmodern social constructionist, there is an agreement that there exists no univocal truth “out there”, only a narrative truth (de Vos, Strydom, Fouché, Delpont, 2011). Reality is known through personal experience and is, therefore, constructed (Gergen, 2009). A social constructionist researcher is interested in exploring the development of jointly constructed understandings of the world that inform our assumptions about reality (Gergen, 2009). Human beings are believed to rationalise their experience through the creation of models of the lived world, which are shared and reinforced through language (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009).

The social constructionist views human experience as mediated by history, culture, and language (Willig, 2001). Hoffman (1991) states that “all knowledge

evolves in the space between people, in the realm of the 'common world' or the 'common dance'. Only through the on-going conversation with intimates does the individual develop a sense of identity or an inner voice" (p. 78). Anderson (1997) adds that "[w]e live with each other in a world of conversational narrative, and we understand ourselves and each other through changing stories and self-descriptions" (p. 184). This alludes to the power of storytelling and its implications for human experience, meaning-making, and social practice.

People often tell stories that convey the dominant discourse within their cultural context (Freedman & Combs, 1996; McAdams, 2008). These translate into normative narratives that dictate a single account of reality through which people evaluate themselves. This may lead to problematic narratives as people have different realities that are embedded in different contexts which may not fit with a singular univocal reality (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007; McAdams, 2001; Morgan, 2000). A social constructionist researcher is interested in deconstructing these normative (and often problematic) narratives through a co-construction of reality (i.e. through conversation between researcher and participants) to facilitate a reconstruction of narratives and, consequently, elicit new meaning (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Patton, 2015). Social constructionism therefore, views the researcher as a subjective co-creator of knowledge and meaning, rather than an objective expert of knowledge. In valuing stories of lived experience, the participant is, in fact, seen as the bearer of expert knowledge. In this way, social constructionism values both the social nature of human life, as well as individual stories.

2.1.3. Theoretical application of epistemology to the present study

International clinical practice reflects a growing interest in including idiosyncratic knowledge of those individuals with a lived experience of addiction (Anderson, 2015; Hammer, Dingel, Ostergren, Nowakowski, & Koenig, 2012; Hänninen & Koski-Jännes, 1999; Irving, 2011; Larkin & Griffiths, 2002; McIntosh & McKeganey, 2000, 2001). The South African clinical context, however, is still largely dominated by a more modernist approach to conceptualising addiction with the focus being on economic, diagnostic, and didactic implications related to addiction and recovery (Hammersley, 2017; Pasche & Myers, 2012; Peltzer et al., 2010; Rassool,

2011). The social constructionist epistemological view of the present study opens new possibilities for new meanings and perspectives to be explored and thereby adds to a novel understanding of addiction and recovery within South African literature. The focus is on how recovering addicts narrate their experiences.

The social constructionist paradigm complements the narrative approach to research inquiry that this study adopted, in that narrative inquiry encourages an appreciative inquiry into the stories we hear, read, and tell on a personal level. It also encourages an analysis of the broader societal narratives embedded within people's social interactions (Webster & Mertova, 2007). From a social constructionist stance, it is accepted that people live their lives according to narratives that are embedded in the available cultural context (Bruner, 2004). Changes in the social and cultural context may inform changes in people's experiences, meaning-making, and ultimately, reconstruction of their narratives. In this way, narratives are believed to provide a sense of lived time (Bruner, 2004). For this reason, the social constructionist epistemology provided the researcher with a set of lenses that enforces an awareness of her own social, cultural, and religious contexts and of the manner in which she perceives and experiences recovering addicts. In exploring the participants' narratives of recovery from drug addiction, the present study explicated the social and cultural interactions that may have informed the recovering addicts' experiences, meaning-making, and ultimately, the reconstruction of their life-narratives.

Furthermore, the interaction between the researcher and the participants and their stories, fostered a further co-construction of meaning and reality, as is a philosophy of the social constructionist paradigm. This allowed the researcher to enter a narrative space with her own experiences and past learning, with an open and curious mind, while still remaining mindful of her social and cultural context, as well as her personal biases. The researcher believed that by creating a space of understanding and remaining respectful and curious as a co-participant in the meaning-making process, the opportunity to initiate dialogue that could provide her with an understating of the participants' experiences was made possible.

2.2 Contextualising drug consumption in South Africa

Drug consumption in South Africa is twice the world norm, with South Africa representing the largest market in illicit drugs compared to other countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Central Drug Authority, 2011; Nel, 2003). In the 2011 World Drug Report (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2011), South Africa was named as one of the drug capitals of the world.

Transformations in the political, economic, and social structures within South Africa since the 1990's have contributed to the country's increased vulnerability to the illicit drug trade (Peltzer et al., 2010). Its geographical location, advancements in infrastructure and communication systems, extensive trading relations with African and international countries, as well as weak border control have resulted in an increase in drug trafficking and abuse in South Africa (Peltzer et al., 2010).

The scourge of drug abuse has major ramifications for South Africa's economic stability. According to the National Drug Master Plan for the years 2013-2017 (Department of Social Development, 2013), the cost of illicit drug use is estimated to be over R100 000 million, with an estimated 6.4% of the annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) representing the cost of illicit drug and alcohol abuse.

In addition to the adverse financial implication of the illicit drug trade on the South African economy, there exists multiple bi-directional social implications which include a breakdown of traditional social and familial structures, increased crime and violence, poverty, unemployment, poor educational attainment, and the escalation of chronic diseases such as HIV/AIDS (Ramlagan, Peltzer, & Matseke, 2010). Extensive research has been done regarding the link between substance abuse and the incidence of HIV/AIDS. Drug abuse has contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS through increased risk-taking behaviours such as the sharing of needles and unsafe sexual practices (Peltzer et al., 2010). Furthermore, there is a strong correlation between substance abuse and criminal behaviour in South Africa. These relate to activities involving theft and robbery, to more violent crimes including assault and domestic violence, where approximately half of perpetrators commit such acts while under the influence of a substance (Padayachee & Singh, 2003). Figures from the South African Police Service suggest that 60% of all crimes are related to substance abuse. These accounts serve as further indication that drug abuse remains a prevalent social

concern in South Africa (South African Police Services: Department of Safety and Security [SAPS], 2007).

In light of the aforementioned implications of the illicit drug use and trade in South Africa, it is expected that the need for treatment centres has increased dramatically over the years. Despite South Africa holding the most developed treatment system in Africa, the demand for treatment far exceeds supply (Pasche & Myers, 2012). The discussion above depicts a disturbing reality of the prevalence of substance abuse in South Africa, highlighting the need for advancements in knowledge that may contribute to the enhancement of current preventative and rehabilitative methods and policies.

2.3 Exploring the concepts of addiction and recovery

Various terms have been used to refer to drug abuse over the centuries. For instance, *dependence*, is used to refer to the physiological, behavioural, and psychological characteristics associated with the repeated use of a drug. Closely linked to dependence is the term *addiction*, which has been defined in various ways throughout history. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2017), addiction is defined as – “The quality or state of being addicted. A compulsive need for and use of a habit-forming substance characterised by tolerance and by well-defined physiological symptoms upon withdrawal.”

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition (DSM-5) (2013) distinguishes between four major diagnostic categories: Substance Use Disorder, Substance Intoxication, Substance Withdrawal, and Substance-Induced Mental Disorder. The DSM-5 has steered away from the use of the term addiction in its substance use diagnostic terminology as there is no formal consensus on its definition and its potentially negative connotation. The DSM-5 has, instead, adopted Substance Use Disorder as the diagnostic term applied to the specific substance abused (e.g. alcohol use disorder, cannabis use disorder) (Kaplan, Sadock, & Ruiz, 2015). Although each specific substance is addressed as a separate disorder, nearly all substances are diagnosed using the same overarching criteria delineated by the diagnosis of a substance use disorder. As described by Kaplan, Sadock and Ruiz (2015, p. 13338-1339), this includes a maladaptive recurrent pattern of substance use

leading to clinically significant impairment or distress. This pattern is manifested by a failure to fulfil major social, occupational, or recreational obligations; use jeopardises physical safety; the presence of a tolerance towards the drug; withdrawal symptoms; a persistent desire and unsuccessful efforts to control substance use; preoccupation with the drug; intense cravings for use; as well as a continuation of use despite an awareness of the adverse effect on one's physiological, emotional, and relational life.

Historically, addiction has been understood in various ways. It has been understood as a sin, a disease, a deviance, and a bad habit; each of these conceptualisations serving as a reflection of a variety of social, cultural, and scientific conceptions (Hammer et al., 2012; Kushner, 2006). From this standpoint, Rassool (2011) posits that we live in an "addictogenic culture," where our cultural world view prioritises instant gratification and pleasure. We are presented with constant exposure and access to addictive substances and activities (such as access to drugs and alcohol, the internet, gambling, or food) which have created new social and cultural norms that are being adopted by individuals, leading to excessive behavioural patterns and, thus, making us susceptible to addictions (Hammersley, 2017; Rassool, 2011; Reinerman, 2005). Such addictive behaviours serve as a means of escaping from the stresses of developed societies (Rassool, 2011). Such a view further alludes to addiction's cultural nesting and the associated norms and values that constitute the cultural milieu. Alcohol, for example, is accepted amongst most Western societies as an accepted social lubricant which promotes relaxation and socialisation. Amongst Islamic and Buddhist cultures, however, alcohol is strictly prohibited and is seen as harmful to the sanctity of one's body and spirit. In this way, the religious and cultural discourse can exercise influence on drug-taking experiences for individuals.

It is apparent that no definitive definition exists at any one point in time as addiction is a dynamic, multifaceted, socially defined phenomenon, rather than a singular entity with univocally defined boundaries (Larkin & Griffiths, 2002). Most definitions for addiction consist of a predominant theme relating to physiological and psychological dependence, tolerance, and powerlessness on the part of the addict (in terms of the addict's ability to exercise choice and control over their behaviour) (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction [EMCDDA], 2013), which are seen as universal to all addicts. Such definitions are grounded in the medical model of addiction which has been the dominant narrative on addiction universally.

According to this model, addiction is accepted as a disease, with the focus of recovery being on the assessment of pathology, diagnosis, symptom resolution, and restoration of former functioning (Best & Laudet, 2010; Rassool, 2011; Rhodes & De Jager, 2014). Such definitive narratives of addiction do not seem to include the personal processes and experiences of the addict, which is a chief focus of this study in an attempt to understand the idiosyncratic experiences of participants' recovery journeys. Overlooking the voices of individuals directly affected by addiction may result in addiction research missing a vital component, that is, the relationship between the biological and social narratives of addiction which could better inform rehabilitative and social policy initiatives (Hammer et al., 2012).

Similarly, there remains no formal consensus on what "recovery" means (Best & Laudet, 2010; Betty Ford Institute Consensus Panel, 2007; Jacobson & Greenley, 2001; Laudet, 2007; Nady el-Guebaly, 2012; White, 2007). Most empirical work on recovery offer definitions that have been imposed by researchers and professionals within the field of addiction research. Few have sought to inform their definitions with the lived experiences of one of the most informative group of stakeholders in the debate around defining recovery, that is, individuals with a history of substance abuse who identify themselves as "in recovery" (White, Boyle, & Loveland, 2003).

The medical model has served as a dominant platform for informing our understanding of addiction and recovery. Definitions of recovery as conveyed by those in recovery, as is reflected in the literature, transcend this clinical, diseased orientated stance. The inclusion of this group of stakeholders, that is, individuals who identify themselves as "in recovery", has culminated in the birth of a recovery paradigm. The recovery paradigm shifts attention from pathology to competence building (Tilsen & Nylund, 2008). As a strengths-based approach to treatment, with the individual at the core, the recovery paradigm emphasises self-management and empowerment across the lifespan (Rhodes & De Jager, 2014; Kirkpatrick & Byrne, 2009; Nady el-Guebaly, 2012).

Researchers such as Laudet (2007), Laudet, Morgen, and White (2006), and White (2007) have pursued to explicate how individuals who self-identify as "in recovery", define recovery through their experience. While participants in such studies viewed recovery as abstinence from all mood-altering substances, their

conceptualisation of recovery transcended beyond substance use cessation to include a continuous process of reconnecting with one's authentic self, self-improvement, and an opportunity to pursue a new and better life. This understanding of recovery emphasises an element of *change* which is the characteristic that distinguishes recovery from mere abstinence. Furthermore, the majority of participants in these studies also considered recovery to be a continuous process requiring ongoing work and "maintenance". Abstinence here is seen as a requirement of the ongoing process of recovery (Laudet, 2007). This stance of recovery is mirrored by the increasing recognition of addiction as a chronic and progressive condition (Dennis & Scott, 2007; McLellan, Lewis, O'Brien, & Kleber, 2000).

Numerous studies have consistently identified familial and peer support, inner strength, spirituality, and an intrinsic desire to get better as critical components in the recovery experience (Blomqvist, 2002; Flynn, Joe, Broome, Simpson, & Brown, 2003; Laudet, Morgen, & White, 2006; Robinson, Krentzman, Webb, & Brower, 2011). Studies have also highlighted the interplay between specific internal and external conditions that define the experience of recovery for some individuals. Internal conditions of hope, healing, spirituality, empowerment, and social connectedness, together with the external conditions of a respect for human rights, the establishment of a positive culture of healing, and access to recovery-orientated services, culminate in the recovery experience (Jacobson & Greenley, 2001; White & Kurtz, 2006).

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Commission (SAMHSA, 2012, par. 5) defines recovery as "a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives and strive to reach their full potential." Included within this definition are four major dimensions that support a life in recovery. These dimensions include, physical, emotional, and spiritual health, a stable living environment, the pursuit of meaningful daily activities, and a supportive social network. The Betty Ford Institute Consensus Panel (2007, p. 222) defined recovery as "a voluntarily maintained lifestyle characterised by sobriety, personal health and citizenship". The UK Drug Policy Commission (2008, p.6) followed up this statement with a definition of recovery as "voluntarily sustained control over substance use which maximises health and wellbeing and participation in the rights, roles and responsibilities of society". These two definitions share four primary components—wellbeing and quality of life (a term White (2007) refers to as "wellbriety"), community

engagement or citizenship, some measure of sobriety, and a personal commitment or sense of agency.

Literature that attempts to provide idiosyncratic definitions of recovery suggest that recovery is experienced as a lifelong journey of transition, a continual process with no end state, in pursuit of a meaningful life. The essence of recovery is lived experience in pursuit of wellbriety, facilitated by principles of recovery that centre on hope, personal volition, self-development, empowerment, and a sense of community; all of which occur in real life settings rather than in rarefied clinical settings. As discussed, the notion that human experience is nested within specific social and cultural milieus is espoused by the social constructionist philosophy. Consequently, in explicating autobiographical narratives, it would be important to remain cognisant of social and cultural milieus and the discourses which operate within them, and how these may inform the way in which the participants of the present study make sense of their experiences and construct their narratives of addiction and recovery.

2.4 Narratives and recovery

The concepts of narratives and life stories have made great inroads in the fields of anthropology, social science, and medicine (Irving, 2011).

The rich web of meanings associated with narratives, the possibility of involving patients from their point of view and of studying their illness experience, and the potential use of narratives as a vehicle for change were among the reasons for introducing narrative models in medicine, psychiatry, psychology, sociology, and medical anthropology. (Taïeb, Révah-Lévy, Moro, & Baubet, 2008, p. 2)

This statement epitomises the “narrative turn”, a growing trend in which researchers explore language resources (such as narratives) which serve to chronologically organise life events, construct meaning, deconstruct assumptions associated with negative experiences (such as illness or traumatic events), and to enact action or “do” something through their performative nature (Gibson, Acquah, & Robinson, 2004; Speedy, 2000). “Narrative” as a verb, “to narrate,” is an expressive action where life experiences and the interpretations of such are brought into a present

time and space. It is through narrating within a shared conversational space of co-created understandings that meaning is formed (Schiff, 2012). Narratives, therefore, perform a particular function. Narratives of change, and more specifically, of recovery, would need to involve a choice to reconstruct stories of addiction into stories that convey meaning and hope, and thereby, serve a motivational function in guiding the narrator towards a new phase of life (i.e. recovery) (Singer, 2004). The narration of an addict's experiences of their journey towards recovery has been endorsed as an instrumental mechanism in making something for which there is little certainty, intelligible (Irving, 2011; Taïeb et al., 2008).

In contrast to this view, Hughes (2007) argues that the focus on narrative renders the embodied aspect of drug addiction invisible. Taïeb et al. (2008), however, argue the importance of using narratives in understanding addict identities and the changes that take place in these narratives during the process of recovery from drug addiction. Narratives may form an integral component of addicts relinquishing the abuse of illicit drugs and may help recovering addicts to, among other things, construct a non-addict identity (McIntosh & McKeganey, 2000, 2001). Taïeb et al. (2008) suggest that the stories that recovering addicts form are moulded by the rhetorical expectations of discourses of illness and recovery within societal and professional realms. Such discourses inform the manner in which addicts (re)construct past, present, and future identities in pursuit of a recovery narrative. Furthermore, rehabilitative treatment services provide specified story models for recovery (Prussing, 2007) which teach recovering addicts a lexicon through which they evaluate their lives in an effort to sustain change (Hammer et al., 2012; Reinerman, 2005). In this way, rehabilitative institutions contribute to the shaping and (re)construction of recovering addicts' narratives of addiction and recovery (Anderson, 2015). As a widely espoused method of inquiry into meaning-making and idiosyncratic experience, narrative work has brought with it valuable empirical contributions in the field of addiction research.

Watson and Parke (2011) speak to the scarcity of qualitative research available on the experience and perceptions of the drug addict. In a United Kingdom study, Watson and Parke (2011) aimed to explore the idiosyncratic experiences of female recovering heroin addicts. In so doing, the narratives of recovery conveyed themes relating to childhood experiences, physiological and psychological effects, and perceptions of recovery. Within these dominant themes, there emerged experiences

of significance for these recovering addicts in terms of their account of factors that precipitated the start of their addiction, maintained it, and then led to renouncing of the addiction. These themes specifically related to love and rejection, bereavement, victimisation, fear, and the search for normalcy (Watson & Parke, 2011).

Similarly, the analysis of autobiographical narratives of participants from a study conducted by Hännenin and Koski-Jännes (1999) yielded comparable themes or experiences. These themes translated into five story types that were analysed based on their emotional, causal, moral, and ethical meanings. The five story types identified among these self-narratives included, the AA story, the growth story, the co-dependence story, the love story, and the mastery story. For the authors, the AA story involved the recovering addicts' acceptance of helplessness at the hands of the addiction, and the acknowledgement that recovery is continuous. Emancipation from oppressive inter- and intra-personal relationships is the chief theme within the growth story, where the recovering addict's role transforms from being a victim to becoming an active change agent. The co-dependence story is characteristic of a repression and denial of negative feelings which lead to the adoption of different forms of addictive behaviours. In this way, self-disclosure served as an important agent in the recovery process (Hännenin and Koski-Jännes, 1999). In the love story, addiction was seen as compensation for a lack of love within the addicts' lives. The formation of loving, healthy relationships and a sense of belonging was associated with recovery narratives. Finally, the mastery story saw the addict as a hero who gains a sense of mastery of their life. This story reflects willpower, responsibility, and ultimately, self-respect. Of significance to each story were the elements of relinquishing guilt, and the movement towards self-love, self-forgiveness, and self-agency on their journey of recovery.

A study conducted by McIntosh and McKeganey (2000) that explored addicts' narratives of recovery found that the transition from the "addict" to "non-addict" identity performed an integral part in the addict's recovery process. Their study yielded three specific themes in which the addict's narrative of recovery could be seen to be constructing a non-addict identity. These included the reinterpretation of or realigning of meaning to the addict lifestyle, which was represented by a shift in narrative that supported the pleasurable elements that accompany drug abuse. Additionally, the research reflected a shift towards a narrative that spoke of the repercussions of drug

abuse, that is, a narrative that acknowledged the “true” nature of the drug as a distortion of lifestyle and reality (McIntosh & McKeganey, 2000). Their narratives further communicated a reconstruction of sense of self as the addict differentiated between themselves before drugs, the person they had become as a consequence of drugs, and finally, the sense of the person they aspired to become following the addiction. The final theme that emerged from the narratives of recovery in this study relates to the addict’s experience of a “turning point” that served as a catalyst for change, as well as the establishment of powerful and convincing explanations for recovery. It is evident that the process of recovery requires a renegotiation and rebiographing of salient life experiences as conveyed through life narratives. For the participants in Irving’s (2012) study, this involved a process of renegotiating power and control, as well as taking responsibility for choices made or paths taken. This process was accompanied by heightened self-awareness and the renewal of meaning attached to such life experiences. Irving (2012) postulates that recovery involves the transition of a “fractured narrative” and resultant “spoiled identity” brought about by drug addiction, through reconstructing one’s identity and life narrative.

Larkin and Griffiths (2002) also place emphasis on the notion that experiences related to identity and selfhood play an integral part in the recovery process. In their study, they explored the experiences of participants with varied behavioural and chemical addictive problems that formed part of both an in- and out-patient rehabilitative programme (grounded on the ethos of the 12-step recovery programme). For participants, addiction was not only an escapist experience, but in the midst of having no sense of self or self-knowledge, their addiction was an effort to fill this void and connect with an identity, albeit one of a drinker or gambler. Fundamental to the recovery process for these individuals, echoed by the institutional narrative, was the identification of the self as a lifelong addict, while still “renewing” or reconstructing themselves and identifying with a new sense of personhood.

Common to the studies discussed in this chapter is the pursuit of a recovery narrative that is reflective of a transition in meaning and selfhood. That is, a recovery narrative that embodies self-acceptance, the renouncing of guilt and forgiveness of self and others, the inclusion of an identity other than an addict-self, and the development of self-agency. These studies highlight the advantages of approaching addiction research from a position that illuminates the narratives of this population. In

so doing, the reader is provided with insight into the very essence of experience that has constructed and reconstructed the life narratives of drug addicts and recovering drug addicts.

Furthermore, such studies also allude to a reciprocal interactional influence that is embedded within these experiential narratives of recovery. These stories speak to a co-construction of reality as the narratives of recovering addicts reflect both a personal and social reality. In explicating narratives of recovery, the present study employed a social constructionist stance to illuminate how underlying social constructs may shape the recovering addict's experience of addiction and recovery, and ultimately how these constructs contribute to meaning-making and the reconstruction of the participant's life narratives.

2.5 Meaning-making through narration

Narratives organise and give meaning to human experience (Riessman, 2005). Narratives serve as a rich source of information about personal meaning and a valuable tool in understanding the human drive for meaning (Beike & Crone, 2009; McAdams, 2012). In an analysis of autobiographical life narratives, Baumeister and Newman (1994) found that finding meaning in life is an innate and vital component of human existence. Many scholars share this view, emphasising the importance of meaning-making in human functioning (Frankl, 1979; Steger, 2012; Wong, 1998, 2012). As human beings, we rely upon socially shared meanings of reality to facilitate understanding as we journey through life. An individual's personal search for meaning in life, however, transcends this shared system of meaning. A search for meaning in life involves an interpretation of one's own actions and subjective experiences in terms of an existentially meaningful life story (Crescioni & Baumeister, 2013; Steger, 2012). The belief that one's life is meaningful informs one's sense of self and increases one's level of life satisfaction and overall well-being (Crescioni & Baumeister, 2013; Steger, Kashdan, Sullivan, & Lorentz, 2008).

Copious theoretical views exist that attempt to explicate what meaning in life is. Crescioni and Baumeister (2013), for instance, posit that the human quest for meaning is shaped by the fulfilment of four needs. Firstly, the need to live life with a sense of purpose which is achieved through the pursuit and fulfilment of salient life goals. For

example, the purposeful pursuit of sobriety following addiction. Purposiveness comprises meeting objective goals and reaching a state of subjective fulfilment (Sommer, Baumeister, & Stillman, 2012; Steger, 2012). Secondly, humans seek a sense of efficacy in that they feel that they are able to exercise control over the course of their lives and that they are capable. A sense of self-worth is another important need in the pursuit of meaning. This involves a need to be seen as a valuable member of one's social and cultural world and includes a sense of belonging. Lastly, Crescioni and Baumeister (2013) postulate a need for self-justification, that is, the desire to feel that one's actions are of value and that they are morally justified.

Life-span theorists have recognised that developmentally consequential transitions are a normative occurrence in human existence. Whether conveyed as developmental stages, crises to overcome, seasons or passages in life (Erikson, 1963; Gould, 1980; Levinson, 1978), the fundamental belief is that living beings are constantly evolving. Change is the only constant in living. While we search for stability and predictability in our lives, our ability to reflect on life means that we are also constantly wanting more and thereby, driven by change. Consequently, human lives are in a constant state of transition, with some (transitional) periods of change being more salient than others in the life course. These periods, as postulated by McAdams, Josselson, and Lieblich (2001), are perceived as "turns in the road, changes in the direction or the trajectory of our lives" (p. 2). Such transitions bring with it a constant (re)construction of the stories of our lives, a constant revising of the plot as experiences are reinterpreted, and subsequently, meaning-making (Hicks & Routledge, 2013; McAdams et al., 2001). These stories of transition, therefore, inform our sense of self in relation to past, present, and future representations of ourselves, the nature of our interpersonal relationships, as well as ourselves in relation to our position within our social and cultural milieu (Hammer et al., 2012; McAdams, 2008; McAdams et al., 2001). Paramount to the present narrative study was the transitional periods that shaped the trajectory of the life narratives of the participants, and how these transitions informed meaning-making processes and reconstruction of their narratives on their recovery journey.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has concerned itself with the elucidation of addiction and recovery. In light of the universal drug pandemic, the necessity to explore alternative understandings of addiction and recovery is made apparent. Narratives have been accepted as a particularly instructive method of studying addiction as it provides access to idiosyncratic knowledge from the experts themselves, that is, those addicted and those in recovery. In addition to the clinical representations, the narrative exploration of experience allows for the explication of latent factors within which addiction and recovery are nested. These factors speak to the cultural and social milieu within which the recovering addict is situated, and influence the way their stories are constructed and meaning is formed.

Such a viewpoint is exemplified by a social constructionist epistemology which is rooted in a postmodern paradigm. This chapter also explored the epistemological lens and its fit for the present study, therein setting the stage for the link between the employed theory and method. In the following chapter, the design and methodology of the present study will be outlined.

Chapter 3

Methodology

If you want your life to be a magnificent story, then begin by realizing that you are the author and every day you have the opportunity to write a new page

(Mark Houlahan)

This chapter maps the journey taken to address the research questions and serves as an outline of how the research was carried out. The primary aim of the present study was to explore the idiosyncratic storied experiences of recovering drug addicts and the associated shifts in meaning-making. The research design, framework of inquiry, sampling, research context, data collection technique, as well as the data analysis methods were selected with the aim of the research in mind.

With a postmodernist social constructionist epistemological foundation (Mitchell & Egudo, 2003; Patton, 2015), the present study adopted a qualitative research design. In taking a qualitative approach, the present study positioned itself within a narrative inquiry framework (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2000, 2005). Narrative inquiry allowed for the realisation of the present study's objectives, in that it provided a way of gathering, investigating, and analysing stories of experience (Riessman, 2008). Stories are considered to be the most primitive form of human communication and narrative form is the universal manner in which people make sense of their experiences (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The present study used autobiographical narratives (see Appendix C) as a source of data collection, along with follow-up semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D for transcripts) to fully explicate the storied experiences of the participants' journey of addiction and recovery. The sampling of participants, research context, as well as the data collection techniques are detailed in this chapter, followed by a discussion on narrative-thematic analysis which was used as a method of data analysis.

The chapter concludes with a discussion on the methods used to enhance the quality of the research, as well as the ethical issues considered during the research process.

3.1 Research design

The nature of drug addicts' experiences of addiction and recovery cannot be quantitatively grasped, as this would forfeit the essence and richness of these individual, first-hand experiences. The focus of the present study is on the perspective of the insider (i.e., the recovering drug addicts themselves), which offers the participant's point of view (i.e., first-hand experience) regarding their journey through addiction and recovery. A qualitative research design was employed to achieve the present study's objectives.

Madigan (2011) differentiates between two types of knowledge generated in the therapeutic endeavour. "Global" or "outsider knowledge" used by practitioners, and knowledge derived from the experiences of people who live with or have overcome a particular problem. Geertz (1973) refers to the latter form of knowledge as "local" or "insider knowledge." The field of psychology was established on modernistic "outsider knowledge," gathered through quantitative research endeavours. In exploring recovery, insider knowledge presents an invaluable source of information which stems from stories of experience. Qualitative research, with its emphasis on subjectivity and its collaborative nature of inquiry (between researcher and the researched), allows for the exploration of insider knowledge. It is designed to study the "experiential life of people" (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 138). Using language as a primary tool, qualitative research allows for the exploration of experience to glean meanings that may not otherwise be observable or discoverable through quantitative research initiatives (Morrow, 2007). In this way, qualitative research resonates with a postmodernist paradigm in which the present study situates itself.

Neale, Allen, and Coombes (2005) question whether qualitative research has any strength and a place in addiction research. For the authors, one of its strengths is that qualitative research assists in studying difficult-to-reach populations and providing in-depth explanations of research findings (Neale et al., 2005). Moreover, qualitative research can aid in clarifying misconceptions related to addiction, as well as in developing and evaluating theories and policies on addiction and recovery. The conclusion is that, in light of its valuable contributions to the field of addiction research, qualitative research should not be viewed as inferior or less valuable than other forms of research methods (Hammer et al., 2012; Neale et al., 2005). In adopting a

qualitative approach, the present study positions itself within a narrative inquiry framework.

3.2 The basic tenets of narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is an approach to gathering, studying, and analysing stories of experience and events (Riessman, 2005). Narrative form or storytelling is considered to be a universal manner in which people make sense of their experiences (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008; Webster & Mertova, 2007). It represents storied ways of knowing and communicating (Riessman, 2002). Riessman (2002) postulates that it is through stories that people communicate and interpret their life experiences. “Human beings are storytellers and human lives are stories to be told” (McAdams, 2008, p. 243). Storytelling is accepted as one of the most primitive and formative modes of human communication, ubiquitously (i.e., across cultural and dialectical dimensions). Narratives, therefore, provide an understanding of the way people construct an understanding of the world (Keats, 2009), and inform the way in which people understand and explain the meaning behind specific events and experiences (Bloom, 2002).

In narrative inquiry, people are seen as embodiments of lived stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry serves to uncover the multiple layers of these stories, and as such, of a person’s experience, as it is within these lived stories that researchers and participants locate meaning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2007; Phillion, 2002; Polkinghorne, 1995). Consequently, narrative inquiry as a methodology is the study of experience understood narratively (Chase, 2011; Murray, 2009). It can be seen as a method of understanding and inquiring into the phenomenon of experience through collaboration between the researcher and participant over time, place, and in social interactions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Stories of experience are explored within a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space specific to the temporality of past, present, and future, personal and social conditions, as well as place (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). In this way, the narrative inquirer understands the temporal transition of events, the stories people tell about these events and themselves, as well as the shifts in meaning-making across time. Narrative inquiry is, therefore, conducive to elucidating the changing conditions of our lives, that

is, the transitions or turns in the road (Hammer et al., 2012; McAdams et al., 2001; McAdams, 2008), and the impact that these transitions may have over time in all spheres of an individual's life (Murray, 2009), including recovery.

The narrative inquirer is also attentive to emotions, hopes, and moral dispositions of the inquirer and participant, as well as to the contextual narratives within which events and experiences unfold and are embedded (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). In this way, a narrative inquiry is cognisant of the narrative environment; that is, the impact of a person's social reality and cultural background on meaning-making (Bloom, 2002). The social dimension further reifies the relational nature of narrative inquiry by directing attention to the collaborative inquiry relationship between the researcher's and the participant's lives (Chase, 2011; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Such a narrative approach to research inquisition compliments the postmodern social constructionist epistemology adopted by the present study.

These basic tenets which serve as the foundation of narrative inquiry, renders this approach to research inquiry as complementary to the objectives of the present study; that is, to explore and gain an understanding of the personal experiences of addiction and recovery of the participants through the stories they tell. In so doing, the researcher intended to elucidate the reconstruction of their life narratives and the shifts in meaning-making, through the process of recovery from drug addiction.

3.3 Research methodology

3.3.1 Sampling

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, that is, a non-probability qualitative sampling technique that involves selecting specific people with specific characteristics within a specific population relevant to the study (Palys, 2008). This method of sampling involves the selection of information-rich cases for in-depth study to illuminate the phenomena being investigated (Patton, 2015). Purposive sampling is considered appropriate for this research endeavour as the objective was to obtain a sample of people that were willing to provide detailed narrative accounts of their experience of the process of recovery from drug addiction. The aims of the present study were concerned with exploring the recovery process as perceived by

the research participants and not with objectively defined measures of whether the participants have ceased their drug use. For this reason, participants were selected based on their own perceptions and beliefs of themselves as being recovering addicts, after having completed a rehabilitation programme with a drug rehabilitation institution. Furthermore, the term “recovering addict” will be used throughout this dissertation in preference to the terms “ex-addict” or “recovered addict” since the preferred term denotes recovery as a process rather than a fixed state.

The present study used a small sample size (i.e., three to six participants) as the aim is not to generalise the findings, but to provide a rich, detailed, idiographic, and meaningful account of participants’ individual experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Harper & Thompson, 2012; Riessman, 2000). Qualitative studies typically have small sample sizes, which allow the researcher the time and opportunity to have extensive interactions with the participants (Ross & Green, 2011). The study served to explicate the experiences of three to six recovering drug addicts. Additional participants would have been recruited based on the richness of the data provided by the initial participants’ autobiographical narratives (that is, until the data was saturated). The sample was obtained via referral from a South African-based drug rehabilitation centre. The sample represented recovering addicts who had already been through a rehabilitative programme (be it within an in-patient or out-patient capacity) with the rehabilitation centre in question. The drug rehabilitation centre identified eight eligible candidates and provided them with the study’s information letter and consent form. Thereafter, the first three to six candidates to contact the researcher were recruited. The motivation for this approach to the recruitment of participants was to uphold confidentiality, to ensure that the rehabilitation centre would not be able to identify the candidates who eventually formed part of the study. The researcher then arranged introductory meetings with those candidates who showed interest in the study. This presented an opportunity to establish rapport, brief the participants about the research endeavour, and to provide the participants with an opportunity to clarify any research-related concerns, as well as to obtain written consent from the participants who agreed to take part in the study. Of the eight participants who were identified, four agreed to participate in the study by signing the informed consent form. One of the participants withdrew from the study; consequently, the findings are based on the storied accounts of three participants.

3.3.2 Research context

The participants were recruited at a South African-based rehabilitation centre. In pursuit of holistic recovery, this rehabilitation centre provides Ibogaine-assisted detoxification therapy to assist in recovery from all forms of dependencies including drugs (legal, prescription, and illegal), alcohol, gambling, sex, as well as other compulsive behaviours. The rehabilitation centre runs a week-long in-patient programme and facilitates up to eight patients at a time as individualised attention and intervention is a fundamental component of their philosophy (Minds Alive, 2017). Ibogaine is a naturally-occurring herbal substance produced from *Tabernanthe iboga*, a perennial shrub that is endemic to the rainforests of Central Africa. Historically, its cultural use has centred in Gabon, where it has been used for centuries in ceremonies of healing and initiation. Ibogaine is highly valued for its physical regenerative properties as well for its potential to catalyse psychological and spiritual transformation (Jeewa, 2009). In a rehabilitative capacity, Ibogaine is used to inhibit physical withdrawal symptoms, reduce cravings, and act as a natural antidepressant for prolonged periods of time. This detoxification process is supplemented by therapeutic interventions that centre on health promotion on all levels (physical, mental, emotional, as well as spiritual well-being). Examples of such therapeutic interventions include individual and group psychotherapy, massage therapy, crystal healing, reiki, body talk, spiritual counselling, as well as orientation on relapse prevention, and life skills. The programme is based on harm-reduction, resiliency-building, motivational empowerment, life skills training, and transpersonal psychology perspectives. After visiting the centre, it became apparent to the researcher that dialogue and the way the rehabilitation team engages with patients are intended to promote a sense of ownership on the part of the addict in his/her process of recovery. While there is a daily programme, it is designed with some room for patients to have input into some of the therapeutic activities in which they choose to engage. Additionally, recovery and “mind over matter” discourses are strongly endorsed among staff and during casual social conversations between patients.

Research into the narratives of recovery as conveyed by recovering drug addicts from an Ibogaine-assisted context is an under-explored avenue within South African-based literature. The participants for the current study were drawn from an Ibogaine-assisted wholeness programme.

3.3.3 Method of data collection

The current store of qualitative research on the experiences of recovery from drug addiction has adopted interviews as a primary source of data collection (Larkin & Griffiths, 2002; McIntosh & McKeganey, 2000; Plumb, 2009; Watson & Parke, 2011). In the proposed study, each participant was asked to write an autobiographical account that detailed their experiences, ranging from their first encounter with a substance to the onset of their drug addiction, and ultimately, to their experience of the recovery process. Autobiographical narratives provide a unique window into the innermost worlds of research participants. Narratives have long been recognised for their therapeutic value and the emotional disclosure associated with writing (Bruner, 2004; East, Jackson, O'Brien, & Peters, 2010; Irwing, 2011). Writing about upsetting emotional experiences has been associated with improvements in mental and physical health (Pennebaker, Mehl, & Niederhoffer, 2003).

In the present study, the autobiographical narratives written by the participants served as the primary source of data collection. In this way, the researcher attempted to exert minimal influence over the participants' initial account of the phenomena under study, thereby more authentically capturing the participants' experience of recovery from drug abuse. After analysing the autobiographical narratives, the researcher deemed it necessary to clarify some uncertainties and to expand on identified themes. One-on-one semi-structured interviews were held with the relevant participants. These interviews were audiotaped. Semi-structured interviews were employed based on themes unique to each participant, following analysis of their individual biographies, that needed clarification and exploration. The use of semi-structured interviews catered for flexibility (Riessman, 2005), rather than confining the researcher to a rigid and structured interview schedule that favours a pre-existing framework of comprehending the topic at hand. This approach supports the methodological aim of this research endeavour, which was to allow the participants to guide the direction of the study and allow for unanticipated phenomena to freely emerge. The interviews also provided an opportunity to conduct credibility checks with participants to ensure an accurate representation of their views (Patton, 2015; Yardley, 2015). Participants were able to provide feedback on the researcher's comments and exploration of themes that emerged during the analysis of their autobiographical narratives and during the interview.

The research interviews were planned to take place at the rehabilitation centre and approval from the centre was granted. It became apparent after informed consent was obtained from participants that hosting the interviews at the centre posed a logistical problem as all participants lived in different provinces. The decision was then made to meet participants in a place of comfort and convenience of their choice, bearing the safety of the participants and the researcher in mind. Willig (2008) postulates that qualitative researchers prefer to study individuals within their own territory, that is, in naturally occurring settings. While the shift in interview location initially posed a concern regarding accessibility for the researcher, being invited into the territory of the participants afforded the researcher access to the participants' lives and enhanced her sensitivity towards their immediate or surrounding contexts. Each respective meeting location, which ranged from participants' places of work to recreational meeting places, allowed the researcher to experience each participant within their work, familial, or extended social roles and contexts.

3.4 Data analysis

The present study positions itself within a narrative research paradigm. The analysis methods used in narrative research vary markedly (Harding, 2013; Riessman, 2000, 2005). Riessman (2000, 2005) proposes a typology of the four main types of analysis and notes that the boundaries between these four groups can be blurred. Thematic analysis is an approach that centres on the content of a story, the "what" that is being told, which then leads to the establishment of themes within an individual's story (Clarke, Braun, & Hayfield, 2015). Alternatively, in structural analysis, according to Riessman (2000, 2005), the emphasis is on the way in which a story is told, "how" the narrator tells their story. Thematic and structural analyses are considered as the foundations of narrative analysis, upon which the interactional (or dialogic) and performative (visual) methodologies are built. Interactional analysis attends to the interactive, dialogic process between speakers (Riessman, 2000, 2005). Finally, performative analysis sees storytelling as a "doing" rather than solely a telling process, where different features (such as characters, audience, and visual images) of a story are analysed (Riessman, 2000, 2005).

The present narrative inquiry adopted a narrative thematic approach to data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Riessman, 2005, 2008) as the focus of the study was to understand the experiences of recovering addicts, to hear their stories, as well as to explicate meaning and transitions within these narratives. The focus is, therefore, on what content the narratives communicate to reach a thorough understanding of the unique elements of the participants' stories. Narrative inquiry centres on the "in process" nature of interpretation, in that it allows for an understanding of how interpretation changes with time, new experiences, and varied social interactions (Riley & Hawe, 2005). The present study is interested in understanding how various themes are reconstructed over time as the participants transition from addict to recovering addict. Adoption of a narrative thematic analysis, therefore, allows for an understanding of how time and context may influence the construction and reconstruction of meaning and in turn, life narratives, as the participants journey to a narrative of recovery.

3.4.1 Narrative-thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, organising, interpreting, and reporting on patterns or themes occurring within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis allows for key themes to be identified within lived stories, while retaining the complexity of and the emotional and motivational meaning connected to the phenomena being narrated (Maple & Edwards, 2010). Narrative thematic analysis strives to keep the story intact while interpreting it (Maple & Edwards, 2010; Riessman, 2005, 2008).

To obtain a rich and detailed understanding of the recovering addicts' life narratives, the researcher engaged in a rigorous inductive process of narrative thematic analysis. This approach is intended to illuminate the latent or underlying assumptions, beliefs, and meanings that shape and inform the explicit or surface meaning of the participants' narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Riessman, 2005). This was achieved by employing a guided outline for conducting a narrative thematic analysis. It is important to note that qualitative analysis by nature, as with thematic analysis, does not encourage a rigid set of rules in conducting research. Instead, it encourages flexibility on the part of the researcher as the research process evolves.

Narrative thematic analysis is not seen as a linear process, but rather a recursive process wherein the researcher moves back and forth between the set of guidelines and phases of analysis throughout the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Harding, 2013; Riessman, 2000, 2005).

Table 1 contains a guideline for the phases of narrative thematic data analysis in the present study, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87):

Table 1.1

Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

Phases	Description of the process
Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transcription of data. - (Re)reading of data and noting down initial ideas.
Phase 2: Generating initial codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Systemically coding interesting data across the entire data set. - Collating data relevant to each code.
Phase 3: Searching for themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collating codes into potential themes. - Gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
Phase 4: Reviewing themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checking if themes work in relation to the coded extracts. - Checking if themes work in relation to the entire data set. - Reviewing data to search for additional themes. - Generating a thematic map of the analysis.
Phase 5: Defining and naming themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing analysis to refine the analysis of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells. - Generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
Phase 6: Producing the product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final analysis of selected extracts. - Relating the analysis back to the research question, objectives, and literature review.
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Thematic analysis was used to analyse the autobiographical narratives of the three participants. Themes derived from this analysis that warranted further clarity and exploration, led to the researcher conducting semi-structured interviews with the three participants. These interviews were then transcribed verbatim and the aforementioned thematic analysis process was applied to the interview transcripts. To enhance the quality of the present qualitative study and ensure credibility, the data was also analysed by an independent coder. This allowed the researcher to establish whether the same kinds of themes resulted from the independent coder's analyses, as well as to identify potential themes in the data that the researcher may not have identified during her analysis (Given & Saumure, 2008). This helped to ensure that the analysis is not confined to one perspective (Yardley, 2015), which further fits with the social constructionist stance of multiple realities or interpretations (Patton, 2015). Themes identified by the researcher and the independent coder were collated into a comprehensive conceptualisation of the experiences of recovering drug addicts. The discussion of the findings is presented in the next chapter.

3.5 Quality enhancement of qualitative research

According to guidelines associated with quality standards for qualitative research, there are numerous areas where researchers have the opportunity to improve the quality of their studies (Elliot, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999; Patton, 2015; Willig, 2013). Yardley (2000) postulates four principles for quality enhancement in qualitative research. As a guideline, Yardley's (2000) principles allow for flexibility during the research process; they did not confine the researcher to any rigid criteria. Moreover, the researcher appreciated that these principles highlighted the importance of conducting ethical and worthwhile research and fostered a sensitivity to and respect for the value of the participants' experiences. Consequently, these principles were selected and applied to this study throughout the research process.

Yardley (2000) posits that *sensitivity to context* is necessary for good qualitative research. This was established by becoming familiar with literature related to the topic of the present study. The researcher also built rapport with the head of the rehabilitation centre by visiting the centre before commencing with data collection. Additionally, creating rapport between the researcher and the participants was a major component in understanding each participant's context. This was done through an introductory meeting between the researcher and the prospective participants which also provided an opportunity to inform them about the study and allow for any of their questions to be addressed. Sensitivity to context extended to the data that were collected by performing proficient data analysis.

Yardley's second principle is that of *commitment and rigour*. Commitment refers to the extent to which the researcher is invested in the data collection and analysis processes (Yardley, 2000). The researcher remained committed to conducting competent and ethical data collection and analysis as is reflected in the explication of the research process and the rich descriptions of data provided. Care was taken to ensure that the same level of diligence and dedication was employed in the transcription and analysis of each case. Rigour draws attention to the appropriateness of the fit between methodology and the topic of the study. The more rigorous a research process, the more trustworthy the findings (Given & Saumure, 2008). Consequently, a rigorous research process enhances the credibility of the study. Credibility pertains to the accuracy of the findings in representing the experiences and ideas of the participants rather than being borne out of the preferences of the researcher (Morrow, 2005). Credibility also refers to the extent to which the data and analysis thereof address the intended focus of the study or research question (de Vos et al., 2011). Providing credibility checks, therefore, means verifying all aspects of the research process to ensure that ethical steps are taken to produce meaningful data. A rigorous qualitative study could include a triangulation of findings (Patton, 2015). In the present study, the researcher used more than one method of data collection (i.e. autobiographical narratives and semi-structured interviews), as well as more than one form of credibility checks (i.e. credibility checks with participants to verify that the researcher's narration of their stories reflects their experiences, as well as through using an independent coder). Triangulation was an important component of the research process, as it aided the researcher in her commitment to highlighting and

honouring the voices of the recovering addicts, by ensuring that their views were not misinterpreted. Furthermore, a reflective journal along with regular supervision meetings enhanced commitment and rigour.

The third principle is *transparency and coherence* (Yardley, 2000). Transparency refers to the clarity in describing the research process and it gives rise to reliability within qualitative research (Given & Saumure, 2008). Reliability refers to the extent to which the data collection process can be replicated to yield the same results in multiple instances (de Vos et al., 2011; Willig, 2008). Paying careful attention to the write-up of the dissertation to enhance the understanding of the reader, reflects the principle of coherence (Yardley, 2000). To facilitate transparency and coherence, the present study provides a rich, in-depth coverage of the research process which includes the research design, methodology, and implementation, as well as an extensive exploration of the findings. The final principle of *impact and importance*, indicates the study's ability to add value to a specific knowledge domain. This principle enhances the quality of a research study in that the completed result will offer readers something of interest and significance (Yardley, 2000). The researcher believes that the findings of the present study will have practical and theoretical implications for mental health practitioners, policy makers, rehabilitative agencies, and the general community, within the field of addiction and recovery in South Africa. Additionally, the findings of this study may have a socio-cultural influence on changing the way we think about the position of addicts and recovering addicts in society, as well as the way we treat people with psychological problems.

While narrative research speaks of a co-construction of meaning between researcher and participant, it is necessary to document and be mindful of how the researcher may influence the process (Elliot et al., 1999; Willig, 2001). As an ongoing reflexive and reflective methodology, narrative inquiry encourages researchers to continuously question their own experiences throughout the research process (Clandinin & Caine, 2008) and to disclose and take ownership of their values and assumptions regarding the topic at hand. This alludes to the principle of *reflexivity*, which enhances the quality of qualitative research (Patton, 2015; Willig, 2013). Reflexivity accounts for the researcher's subjectivity by keeping the researcher cognisant of her influence and co-involvement in the meaning-making process throughout the course of the research endeavour (Shaw, 2010); that is, an awareness

of how the researcher's "own experiences, beliefs, and interests have shaped the research" (Willig, 2008, p. 10). The researcher kept a reflective journal where personal opinions, thoughts, and feelings were acknowledged and made visible, and in so doing, fostered reflexivity and transparency in the research process (Ortlipp, 2008). The reflections contained in the journal were used to inform the process of describing the findings.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Conducting ethical research is also identified as a key criterion of quality in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Tracy, 2010). Ethics refers to the moral conduct of an individual, while research ethics refers to a critical evaluation of the consequences of research and the manner in which a study is planned, conducted, and reported (Creswell, 2017). Research ethics can, therefore, be viewed as the application of certain principles to guide the researcher in producing ethical research (King, 2010). The following ethical matters were considered in the present study:

1. Informed consent: To obtain informed consent, the researcher explains the study to participants before conducting the research, and does so in a language that they understand (Creswell, 2017). Hence, the participant can knowingly choose to partake in the study, making participation voluntary. No deception was used in this study as the participants were fully informed about all aspects of the research process. A comprehensive informed consent letter was drafted for both the rehabilitation centre (see Appendix A) and the participants (see Appendix B), to make the information clear. The informed consent letter was presented both verbally and in writing to avoid any misunderstandings. Informed written consent was obtained from the selected drug rehabilitation centre (see Appendix A). Each participant provided their informed written consent to participate in the study and to be audiotaped during the interviews. As the research explores sensitive experiences within their personal lives, the participants were advised of the possibility of experiencing distress, in which case they would be provided with counselling resources. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, upon which any data related to

them would be destroyed (Whitley, 2002). No incentives were used to encourage the participants to partake in the study (King, 2010).

2. **Right to confidentiality:** In maintaining confidentiality, pseudonyms were utilised and any identifying information removed or disguised (Creswell, 2017) in the write-up of results, the journaling process, as well as during research supervision. Participants in the present study were informed that the researcher would engage in consultation with her research supervisor. The participants were recruited by the head of the rehabilitation centre. To uphold confidentiality, the researcher and the head of the rehabilitation centre did not discuss the collected data. Furthermore, the drug rehabilitation centre was asked to identify a minimum of eight eligible candidates and provide them with the information letter and consent form. Thereafter, the first three to six candidates to contact the researcher would be recruited for the study. In this way, the rehabilitation centre was rendered unable to identify the three candidates that eventually formed part of the present study.
3. **Right to disclosure:** The right to disclosure implies that participants have the right to decide what information they wish to share (Thomas & Hersen, 2011). The recovering addict participants' right to disclosure was respected throughout the research process.
4. **Psychological support:** The researcher assessed the possibility of harm during the data collection process. Considering the sensitive nature of this topic, participants may be faced with distressing memories and emotions upon recollecting their experiences. The researcher remained attentive to any signs of distress throughout the data collection process. Such distress was observed in the case of one of the participants who withdrew from the study. The researcher provided this participant with relevant psychological and rehabilitative support and intervention resources/referrals.
5. **Storage and dissemination of data:** For the duration of the study, all documentation and other sources of data were physically stored in locked filing cabinets, while all electronic data was secured with a password. Upon completion, the records and data will be stored in accordance with the regulations set by the University of Pretoria. The research findings obtained

from the study have been used to fulfil the requirements of a Masters mini-dissertation in the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Pretoria. The dissemination of the research results will be in hardcopy and electronic formats and may be accessible on the University's website, as well as in peer reviewed journals. The participants were made aware of this, and written consent was attained to use the data for future research.

3.7 Conclusion

“Partnerships are good engines for narratives” (Jones, 2017). This chapter elucidated the partnering of theory and methodology, and of researcher and participant, in collaboratively exploring life narratives. Narratives, as a distinct discourse, can be seen as a way of shaping, ordering, and connecting experiences and understandings thereof, into a meaningful whole. The narratives of three recovering drug addicts, who were recruited from an Ibogaine-assisted rehabilitation centre, were used to develop an understanding of drug addiction and recovery grounded in experience. This chapter maps the methodological journey taken by the researcher.

A qualitative research design allowed for the realisation of the objectives of the present study, as it allowed the researcher to access to “insider knowledge”. Narrative inquiry was used as a tool to create a narrative space in which the participants’ experiences of addiction and recovery could be understood and their voices heard. Data was collected through autobiographical accounts as well as follow-up interviews. A narrative-thematic analysis was employed as a means of analysing the data.

This chapter also explored the ethical considerations and efforts to enhance the quality of research that were upheld throughout the research process. The following chapter provides an explorative, in-depth discussion of the findings.

Chapter 4

Discussion of findings

You no longer have a secret. You have a story.

(Shelly Lewis)

This chapter elucidates the themes that were reflected in the three participants' narratives of addiction and recovery, following narrative thematic analysis of autobiographical accounts (see Appendix C) and interview transcripts (see Appendix D). The participants were in different stages of the recovery process but all identified to be "in recovery" at the time of recruitment. All participants had been part of an Ibogaine-assisted rehabilitation programme. All the participants came across as relaxed and willing to participate in the research and share their experiences.

The chapter begins by briefly introducing the protagonists before continuing to depict how the life narratives of recovering addicts transformed over time through the process of recovery. Shifts in meaning-making attached to the experience of addiction and recovery as conveyed through idiosyncratic stories will also be made explicit. Six main themes and eight sub-themes were identified using narrative thematic analysis as a method of analysis. Each theme will be discussed separately. Responses from participants are included as evidence for the themes. Brackets ([]) indicate responses that did not follow immediately after each other, or phrases that were omitted, such as responses of the interviewer. Participants' words have been used verbatim as it was represented in their autobiographical narratives and the interviews, so as to preserve the characterisation and authenticity of the participants' linguistic repertoire, and to depict the nature of the interviews.

4.1 The Participants

Adam: Adam is 31 years old and resides in a close-knit Muslim community in Gauteng, where he lives with his mother, wife and two year old son. He has been clean for the past eleven years and is actively involved in community support and drug awareness campaigns. He speaks passionately about his family business, his family,

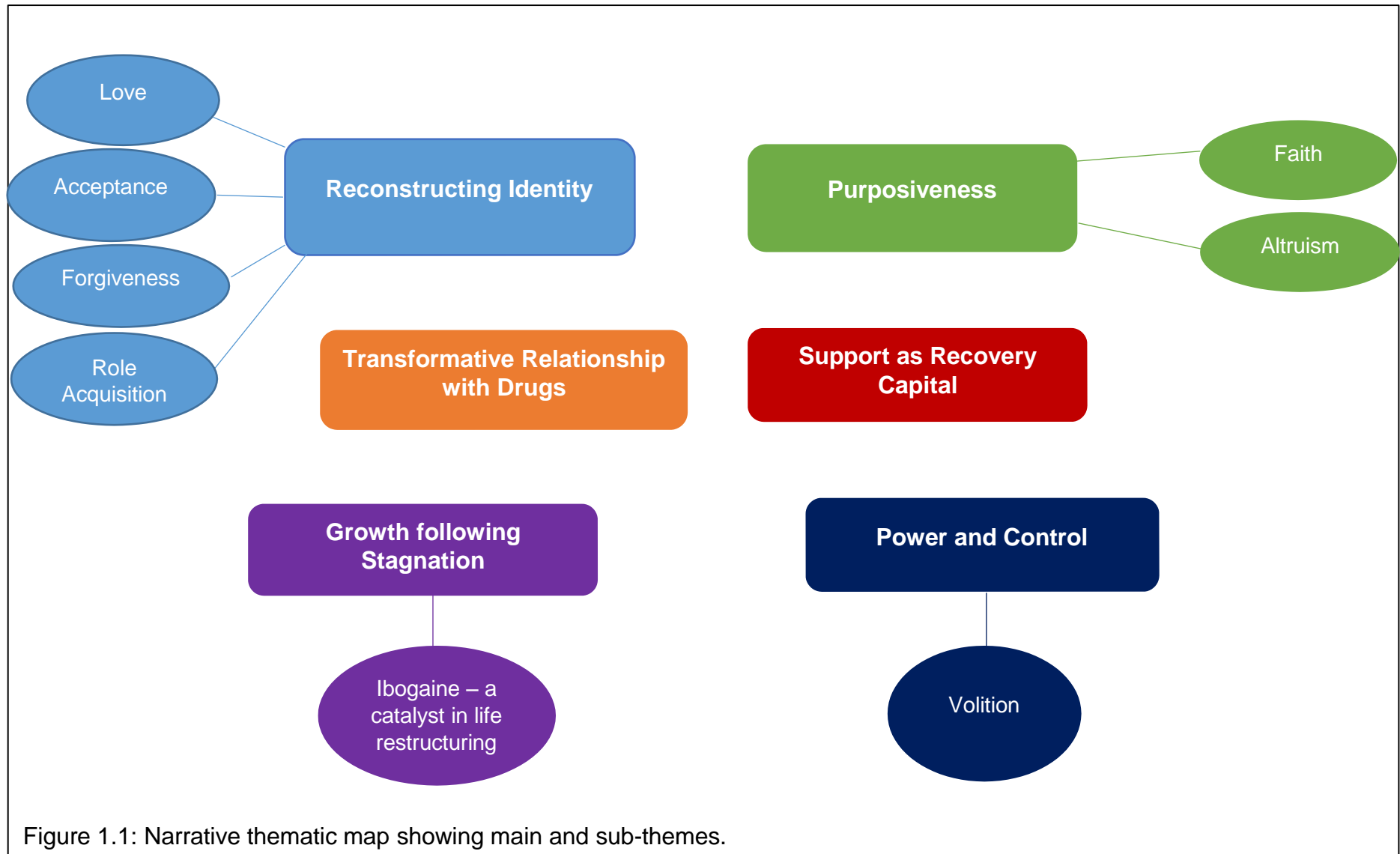
and the counselling he does as part of the community forum. Family is a major aspect of his narrative. Our meetings during the data collection process took place either at his family business or at a recreational place, surrounded by his family or with them in sight. Our interview was held at a quiet part of the local zoo, a place where he often frequented during the early stages of his recovery. He came across as eager to share his experiences and knowledge.

Estelle: Estelle, a recovering addict for the past three years, approached this project with much enthusiasm and openness. She is a 31 year old mother of one who resides in Kwazulu-Natal, with her mother and six year old daughter. Her daughter and the idea of the ideal family life were often predominant features of our discussions. She chose to have our interviews held at a local coffee shop, a social gathering, reflecting her sociability as well as her openness to discussing her journey through addiction and recovery.

Miriam: Miriam is 26 years old and has been clean just shy of three years. Having experienced multiple relapses before pursuing her present recovery journey, her current experience of being clean for almost three years without relapsing represents a huge transition in her narrative. She lives in Gauteng with her father and step-mother. All of our meetings took place at the family business that Miriam and her father head. Her role in the business and the sense of respect and trust that it communicates to her, perform a key role in the re-authoring of her narrative. This business also plays a key role in redefining her relationship with her father following the dysfunction that accompanied both their addictions.

4.2 Findings from the analysis

The themes identified following the analysis will be explicated in this section. Six main themes and eight sub-themes were identified. Figure 1 represents the thematic map (Braun & Clarke, 2006) that emerged from the analysis. A discussion of each theme follows.



4.2.1 Transformative relationship with drugs

A pivotal element of the recovery process was the participants' altered relationship with drugs and the meaning that they attached to drugs. In constructing non-addict identities, participants in a study conducted by McIntosh and McKeganey (2000), similarly engaged in a process of reinterpreting the experience and meaning they associated with drugs. The participants' narratives suggested a performative or functional role of drugs in their lives. Their addiction manifested as a result of the pursuit or "chase" for the fulfilment of that specific function. This reference to a chase is reflected in a phrase shared by Estelle when she described the method she used to smoke heroin – "*chasing the dragon*" and a sentiment also shared by Miriam in her words – "*from crawling in crack pipes, tripping over lines of snow into the creases of my foil, chasing away I go*".

For Adam, his curiosity was soon followed by the chase for the same novel feeling of euphoria that accompanied his first experience with each new drug. Schaler (2000) postulated that when drug users first indulge, they do not anticipate problems that may be associated with drug use. Adam explains:

You carry on smoking [weed], you can smoke as much as you want but you won't get that laugh, you won't get that same feeling. So the first feeling was awesome. You laugh, you feel this instant rush or whatever it was you know. But as time goes by, it's not there anymore. So it's like chasing something that's never gonna occur again. [] And, I think that's what keeps people using. It's those first moments that you have you know. Like the first time you use ecstasy or CAT, it's an awesome, awesome vibe, but uhm, all of a sudden, you never get that same feeling again. [Adam]

Estelle's addiction manifested on account of a chase for answers as she explains:

I wanted to know, what was so good about this thing, it fucked up my whole life, you understand. [] The one man I loved so much didn't want me, and didn't want my child. He was chasing after a drug. Now what is so good about this drug that he wants this more than me and his child? [] I don't know what he

loves more in this stuff than me, but I want to know, I want the answers, I need answers, and then only will I be able to forgive him for everything he has done, I will understand. [Estelle]

Common to all participants was the escapist function of drugs. Drugs allowed them a temporary escape from negative experiences in their lives that reinforced their sense of powerlessness, feeling of being unloved and unworthy. Estelle depicts this when she narrates the story of the events that precipitated her first relapse:

I was heartbroken cause the women whom I trusted with my gift from God could do that to me, then the second man I loved hurt me by not standing by my side [] The very next day I relapsed. The hurt the pain was so much for me to bear, I needed to be numbed all over again, I needed to feel nothing cause I was feeling used, betrayed, unloved alone, like a dog to come back to my mother's house and hear words everyday about what a failure and a disgrace I was. [Estelle]

This was a predominant theme in Miriam's narrative. Her initial escape was through self-harming and more specifically cutting.

I was real messed up as a little girl, I mean as messed up as they get. I was 9 years old, it was New Year's Eve, and I sat in the bathroom with a scissor and just started scratching my legs till it bled a little. [] As time went by, every time I was upset I would do it again, tiny little scratches. I did this until it stopped becoming an attention seeking thing, it started to give me relief, it made me feel better, I started finding my peace in it. [] Over more years the scratching turned into cutting, the cutting into slicing and the slicing into hacking. As I sit and write this right now I cannot count the amount of scars I still have all over my body. [Miriam]

For both Miriam and Estelle, substance abuse was a key character in their stories since their childhood. Their fathers were alcoholics, and drug abuse was

common in the lives of their extended families. This brought about much curiosity for Miriam who experimented with cigarettes and alcohol at a young age. The sexual molestation by her uncle served as a catalyst in Miriam's adoption of drugs as a means of escape and emotional numbing. Cutting as well as drug abuse, both self-harming in nature, served as coping mechanisms in providing an escape from her internal emotional pain.

My first line of cocaine sent me to a world of peace. Obviously that was a delusion. I couldn't get off it. I loved it. Cocaine was my first love. That's what I called her. I was well out of hand at this point. I guess my mother couldn't understand why this is happening to her little girl. [Miriam]

Miriam's escapist repertoire included living a haphazard, nomadic life during the peak of her addiction narrative. Her move from place to place and from one romantic relationship to the next was motivated by feelings of vulnerability, threat, and loneliness. Her addiction narrative communicates a chase for a sense of peace, which she appears to have discovered on her recovery journey.

Drugs involved a chase for momentary relief from experiences that would have otherwise left the participants emotionally distraught, that is, a pursuit of an escape from their realities. Narratives of recovery communicated a retrospective acknowledgement of the destructive relationship that the participants shared with drugs.

Whereas if you really look at it, everything you've been doing in the past was wrong, you've just been destroying yourself, it's total destruction basically. [Adam]

Being in the recovery phase of life, characteristic of growth and reconstruction, the participants communicated a deep hatred toward drugs and its accompanying destructive properties. Adam articulates this in the following excerpt, as an important process of building confidence in oneself as a recovering addict:

So it takes this amount of time where you can say this thing doesn't bother me anymore and you build that amount of strength where you actually learn to hate it. When you create that type of hate for drugs, than you can actually help people. [Adam]

According to McIntosh and McKeganey (2000), the ability of recovering addicts to narrate a reconstruction through the process of recovery is highly dependent on their ability to provide a reinterpretation of aspects of their drug using lifestyle. Reconstructing the relationship between the recovering addict and drugs also involves the identification with a renewed lifestyle. This encompasses negating a drug lifestyle in favour of a recovery lifestyle. O'Donnell (2015) postulates that as the drug lifestyle progresses, addicts become discontent with living conditions and social relationships. In O'Donnell's (2015) study, all the participants expressed discontent with their extensive involvement with drug using and the adoption of the drug user identity. The same kind of discontent was expressed by the participants in this study. Estelle and Miriam explain their eventual discontent with their drug lifestyle:

I always had a smile, always happy, bubbly, joyous...whilst deep down within me was an empty pit...sadness lurked, depression creeped, all my hurt all my pain, bottled up. [] I was sick and tired of getting up and looking at my dealer's face in the morning. I got tired of waking up and thinking bout smoking. Smoking before I sleep. [Estelle]

I was tired of life yes, I was tired of the way I was living, I was tired of everything, I was tired of the fact that I could not stop drugs. [Miriam]

4.2.2 Growth following Stagnation

Crawling in a crack pipe, tripping over lines of snow, I rushed as I chased crystals a blue flame below. Round and round I go in a globe roll and burn roll and burn, then down seeking equilibrium, to green and cream I turn... [Miriam]

The abovementioned excerpt epitomises a predominant sense of “stuckness” or stagnation that featured in the participants’ narratives during their addiction journey. Addiction was experienced as a spiral in which participants felt entrapped, defeated, and lost, with no beginning and no end. This period of their lives was characteristic of the absence of growth, purpose, and vision. Estelle describes the period in which she was involved in drugs as “*the period of death*” in her life. This suggests that during that time, she had lost hope, everything that happened during that time did not bring value in her life. Adam likened the life of drugs to death when he highlighted that “*everything comes to a standstill, financially, relationships and career*”, suggesting that addiction is a self-limiting process. He explains:

I could never grow in life...in any direction of life. [] You sort of lock yourself in a nut shell I guess, when you use you know. You end up in this one lil avenue and you can't really move forward. [Adam]

Similarly, Miriam described this stagnation as: “*My reality of addiction was that of entrapment or being completely lost*”.

Recovery represented the ability to transcend the “crack pipe”, that is, the ability to break free from the captivity of addiction. The attainment of personal growth and a sense of purpose in life were prominent features in the recovery narratives of the participants. Growth brought with it a sense of hope and freedom; attributes that were novel experiences to the participants following years of addictive captivity. Adam believes that outside the life of drugs, there is more one can do when he said: “*You'll achieve different things without being caught up in a spiral*”.

Miriam explained her personal growth as:

Today I can very proudly say that I have grown. I have grown to such an extent that I know where my responsibilities lie and I know what is expected of me. I do not live for my addiction anymore, I am no longer a slave or tied up at the jaws of doom. I am free, free to live like a person, a true person, one who needs to take accountability when needed and one who feels feelings.

Synonymous with the growth story in the work of Hänninen and Koski-Jaënnes (1999), the basis of growth in recovery is the transformation of the person from a victim or a puppet to a consciously acting independent subject.

4.2.2.1 Ibogaine – a catalyst in life restructuring

Cutting across all the participants was the mention of the role played by Ibogaine in the recovery process. Ibogaine was affiliated with the notion of starting anew, a sentiment shared by all the participants in this study. Growth symbolised the ability to nurture something new. For the participants, this was a renewed opportunity to nurture a life authored differently, that is, a life that nurtures a narrative of recovery.

Ibogaine was portrayed to be an active agent in their change process. It, by nature, facilitated a resetting or rebalancing of brain chemistry (Brown & Alper, 2017), which was described as a cathartic experience in which participants' were able to relinquish the emotional baggage they had internalised for many years. This sense of emancipation that accompanied this experience served as an opportunity to in a sense, "start over" and author a life story they could embrace.

Furthermore, reflected in the participants' narratives was a focus on mind, body, and soul. Each participant highlighted a sense of empowerment with being able to control their mind, which in turn, informed decisions they made regarding their overall well-being. Such a view reverberated in the narrative environment or institutional shaping of stories (Polletta, Pang Ching, Gardner, & Motes, 2011). In this way, the influence of the treatment context in narrative construction is apparent, as the rehabilitation centre that the participants attended promoted holistic recovery as well as a mind over matter discourse. The structure of the Ibogaine programme also reinforced the idea of volitional change and ownership over one's recovery process. Aspects of this rehabilitative lexicon was reflected in the participants' narratives, and further served to inform their understanding of what recovery means to them. Adam articulates:

It means a...it's basically a restart to life. So basically you get to relive your whole life again, without making the mistakes you made in the past. [] Change has gotta come from within. When you decide to change it becomes easier 'coz you have that will. [] It's all mind over matter [] Recovery is a lot more than just leaving the drug. It's leaving the lifestyle that you lived. So it's gotta consist of

a complete change. Change in your lifestyle, change of the places, the people...change of pretty much everything around you. [] You like this new person who starts exploring all over again. It teaches you different ways, differs choices, and you'll find different joys in life. It takes time, but you will find it. I sorta became my own person and found my own strength. Much more luck came into my life after the restart button. [Adam]

The distinctive features of the subjective experience mediated by Ibogaine include what has been termed “the slide show” or as Adam describes it, “a real-life avatar movie”, which is a panoramic, rapid readout of long-term visual memory (Alper, Lotsof, & Kaplan, 2008). Miriam described this panoramic episode as: “*Utter peace of mind, true bliss, serenity, and inner peace. Like calm waters of a flowing river after angry crashing waves of the ocean*”. The common theme amongst the participants were the attribution of insight and meaning to the content of the psychoactive state it produces (Brown & Alper, 2017; Schenberg, de Castro Comis, Chaves, & da Silveira, 2014). In this respect, Adam and Miriam recalled:

I could go back, I mean, as I say I couldn't remember...they told me my pond [ponds] was bugged and my cells...but after Ibogaine I could remember, my nursery school friends, I could remember the toys I took to the class, I could remember my teacher. Shit, I could go back to when I was five years old. I mean, there were certain things that I didn't choose to remember, like the really bad images. I guess Ibogaine just deleted it for me or I just chose not to remember it, but it was amazing you know. I could hold onto the good memories and I could start all over again. [Adam]

My experience with Ibogaine, was the most amazing thing that ever happened to me. The journey that I was taken on was so real. The thoughts that flashed through my mind as it placed itself in the right places. Every feeling I felt was real. For the first time in my life (or for as long as I can remember) I could feel real things. Real thoughts, real everything!!! I had to be asleep while having the treatment done but I do remember how it felt. I remember for a day after the Ibogaine I couldn't even walk properly, but such a pure feeling, the feeling of innocence all over again, there isn't a way to describe it. There is just nothing out there in this world like Ibogaine. [Miriam]

Another theme was the characterisation of an interval of diminished post treatment drug craving as a window of opportunity for personal change (Brown & Alper, 2017). This corroborates well with the account of participants in this study:

Whereas, what Ibogaine did was within six hours, it re-boosted all my cells. I mean, I had a brand new brain overnight which no doctor could do for me and no one else could do for me. And uhm, it changed my life totally. I mean, it helped me to forget everything I needed to forget. It gave me that chance to, to restart you know, totally fresh. [] ...so you reset your brain, and then when you come back, you reset your life. [Adam]

In this way, participants credited Ibogaine to have made a significant contribution towards their recovery journey. Estelle credited it when she said that: *“Ibogaine, it was pain free hassle free... and since then I'm drug free”*. These findings also provide further evidence of the effectiveness of Ibogaine in reducing drug withdrawal, cravings and use over a lengthy period. More importantly, Ibogaine was instrumental in bringing a balance between mental, emotional, and spiritual stability, and physical wellness in the process of recovery.

4.2.3 Power and control

A dominant theme that reflected in each of the three narratives was the shift in power and sense of control as the participants transitioned from addict to recovering addict. As previously discussed, addiction was characterised as a period of limitation, entrapment and meaninglessness. Participants' felt hopeless and powerless in exercising choice and voicing themselves as they felt enslaved by their addiction. Ironically, while addiction reinforced a sense of powerlessness, participants recall using drugs to gain a sense of power and control which they felt when they were intoxicated, albeit an illusive and temporary sense of power.

Adam describes feeling invincible once he consumed drugs. He explains:

I felt useless, like hopeless. Sometimes when I took I felt powerful, like I got this ego that I'm better than other people and I'm braver than other people. I guess that's not what life's about you know. [Adam]

Similarly, Estelle recalls feeling strong after smoking heroine following experiences that left her feeling vulnerable; a feeling that she feared. She explains this in recollecting the events that preceded her second relapse, that is, when her family attempted to have her daughter removed from her care:

And then you won't even find a tear on me if I smoke, never. I can say the worst thing about my life and what has happened to me, and I won't shed a tear. That's what I liked about this drug, that's why I went back to this drug after this happened because I didn't like the person that was sitting in the bed crying after being hurt again. I hated it with a passion, and I wanted to be this strong-ass person, because with my mother you have to be strong. [Estelle]

Abuse was a prominent feature in both Miriam's and Estelle's narratives. Miriam had multiple romantic relationships, each one characteristic of a pattern of sexual, emotional, and physical abuse which left her feeling disenfranchised. Miriam's story depicts a longing for control and power within these abusive relationships. For Miriam, these were not relationships, but "wars" that she found herself needing to fight. She describes using drugs as her way of "breaking" them and exercising power, even if temporary and false, over her abusive partners who she perceived as being physically too strong.

The war must go on. [] The abuse continued, but that was all good with me. I allowed it and allowed it, knowing that as much as he thinks he is winning, I am in fact killing him silently. I would make him do so much drugs at a time that he would lose his head. Many times he lost it, paranoid as hell, scared and vulnerable. It was these moments when I would attack his mind. I almost succeeded in making him kill himself. [Miriam]

Most of the scars on my body reminds me of my rape experiences. Every time I was raped I would go crazy with a blade. My whole idea was, no one can hurt me like I can hurt me. [Miriam]

Rape leaves a victim feeling disempowered and vulnerable. The abuse and rape that Miriam was subjected to reinforced a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness. Eventually, Miriam believed that permitting the abuse and inflicting harm upon herself was a form of taking control and exercising power over her circumstances. Upon reflection, she acknowledges these attempts as failed attempts in fulfilling a yearning for control: *“Because its control that I was, that I was wanting”*.

In retrospect, participants were able to identify this sense of falsehood that accompanied their experience of addiction:

I guess I was still stuck in the delusion you know which is a scary thing. [] it seems like a cool thing to do but actually it’s just a big delusion because [of] all the damage it occurs through your life. [Adam]

Adam also describes drugs as a *“diversion”* which robbed him of the success he indulged in during his life prior to the start of his addiction. Miriam shows great awareness of the illusionary sense of relief that she chased during her addiction lifestyle:

My first line of cocaine sent me to a world of peace. Obviously that was a delusion. [Miriam]

This is consistent with the notion that in constructing a recovery narrative, addicts need to recognize the “true” nature of the drug as a distortion of lifestyle and reality (McIntosh & McKeganey, 2000).

4.2.3.1 Volition

Researchers are of the opinion that recovery is only sustainable and meaningful when motivated by volitional change (Laudet, 2007; Nady el-Guebaly, 2012; White, 2007). This speaks to self-will and an active decision to choose recovery over addiction. This is a sentiment shared by all three participants. The disempowerment that accompanies the addictive lifestyle is perpetuated by an inability to have a voice and a choice. Adam resonates the life of drugs to a lack of control, when he says that when using drugs, “*your ability to make choices is taken away and you are just like a robot*”. His narrative of recovery depicts a large sense of empowerment that accompanied regaining control over his mind and body, which were experienced as significant losses during his addiction. He explains what it is like to be in control:

You know, it [choice] was the best gift in life that was stripped away, taken from me. So, I would say it's almost everything, coz when you can make choices, you basically in control, and that makes a big difference. [Adam]

Adam continues to explain the impact that regaining control has had on his experience of recovery.

You sorta take control of your own life again. Take control of your own mind. Like they all say, a mind is an excellent servant but a terrible master. So to have control of your mind alone I guess is positive enough because it can let you achieve anything you wanna achieve. If you've got control of your mind than I guess you've got pretty much everything. The thing that I appreciate the most or the most positive thing is to have control of my body and control of my mind. And when you have that, you can pretty much achieve anything. Mind, body and soul. If you get those three things back, than you've pretty much got everything. You can't have your soul when you on drugs coz you forever in a intoxicated state, you losing your health and obviously your mind gets trapped with whatever chemicals are going in. So when you recover, you get control of your mind, body and soul and when you have that then everything else can just follow. And I guess that's the most beneficial thing

that I've ever recovered is having yourself back after losing yourself when you were on drugs. You free. [Adam]

Volition serves as a source of accountability and ownership over, and commitment to, one's recovery. Estelle describes the financial sacrifices she made in putting her husband through rehab where *"his only job was to stay clean, but he just wasn't ready"*. Similarly, each of the participants recounted multiple attempts by significant others to have them committed to rehabilitation centres, multiple relapses experienced by Estelle and Miriam, all of which proved futile as the participants were not ready for change. The story of Miriam also confirms the notion that recovery does not work if not self-initiated. A key contribution of the failed rehabilitative attempts was that she went for rehabilitation as an escape or retreat when she reached deadlocks in life. With this, she made a distinction between recovery and real recovery. Real recovery is when one really wants to change; when she was *"serious about it and really wanted to start life"*.

For Estelle, the first step to recovery is admitting to and owning your identity as an addict. Only then can one sincerely commit to change, which has to be a personal endeavour. The role played by volitional change in sustaining recovery is further endorsed by Adam.

So when I got clean I didn't get clean for my child, I didn't get clean for society, I got clean for myself. [] It's me that wants to change. It's me that wants to stop. The big thing is me. When you speak to an addict, they need to change for themselves. [Estelle]

Change has gotta come from within. When you decide to change it becomes easier coz you have that will. [Adam]

4.2.4 Reconstructing identity

A bedrock of recovery was the participants changing relationship with themselves. Intrapersonal change fostered the emergence of a reconstructed sense of self; a metamorphosed identity, which inevitably facilitated growth and changes in

interpersonal relationships. Larkin and Griffiths (2002) also emphasize that experiences related to identity and selfhood play an integral part in the recovery process. In constructing a non-addict identity, McIntosh and McKeganey (2000) posit that recovering addicts need to provide narratives in relation to the reconstruction of the individual's sense of self. While the term recovery is often conceptualised as a regaining or retrieval of functioning (Merriam Webster dictionary, 2017), the participants' narratives suggest that the pursuit of recovery involved both a reconnection with their authentic self, as well as a discovery of other dimensions of selfhood. In constructing non-addict identities, participants' narratives reflected renewed understandings in meaning attached to the experience of love, forgiveness, acceptance, and role acquisition.

4.2.4.1 Love

People go to where love is, it doesn't matter how, who is the person that's giving you the love, as long as you're getting the love. [Estelle]

Estelle shared the above excerpt when narrating the story of what she described as a constant, desperate yearning for love and approval; emotional needs that she never received from her primary caregivers. Estelle and Miriam reported problems fitting in with their own families, peers at school and the society in general. Estelle felt unwanted and rejected by her own biological parents from the onset.

You see my truth is I never truly fitted in at home, for many years I believed I was adopted, even at school I never really had good friends, they just used me for what I had at that time, at home I was born a disappointment, my parents wanted a son. [Estelle]

A longing for a sense of belonging and love often resulted in over-compensatory behaviour and engaging in activities that often resulted in guilt and shame. Estelle goes on to say:

I was always going to be like a nobody, and always trying to prove myself to people, to make people love me and er... doing things so people can love me, it's always, for me in the beginning it was a search for love. [Estelle]

Both Estelle and Miriam described themselves as “messed up” and “broken” individuals before and during their addiction. Researchers postulate that former addicts’ ability to see their self as damaged and identify with a ‘spoiled identity’ is in fact a critical and necessary aspect of the recovery process, as it facilitates the addicts’ search for the establishment of “acceptable” identities (Irving, 2012; Martin, 2011, Neale, Nettleton, & Pickering, 2011).

Estelle and Miriam attributed this to the fact that they come from “broken homes”, with a history of drug abuse, alcoholism, and violence. Dependence on drugs is often associated with severe family dysfunction (Alterman, Cacciola, Ivey, Coviello, Lynch, Dugosh, & Habing 2010; Blum et al., 2000). The absence of care, comfort, protection, affection and empathy within dysfunctional family systems may place vulnerable family members at risk of drug use (Choate, 2015; Lemos, Antunes, Baptista, Tufik, De Mello, & Formigoni, 2012; Saatcioglu, Erim, & Cakmak, 2006).

A pivotal underlying factor in their storyline was the impact that the divorce of their parents’ had on their self-concept. The divorce reinforced their feeling of not belonging and their hunger for love and security. Miriam describes growing up with a lot of anger and animosity towards her parents for divorcing:

Growing up I watched my cousins enjoy a full functional family. [] I hated that my family was not normal, full of animosity and so much drama! Growing up being told hateful things about my father. Not being able to ever bond with my mother as she was too caught up in her own life and pain. I was alone, in a big world all on my own. [Miriam]

Estelle’s narrative was especially deeply entrenched in cultural expectations and ideological systems. Cultural discourses that informed ideals on family, marriage, and acceptable behaviours of women featured predominantly in her story, and influenced the manner in which she evaluated herself and made meaning of her

experiences. Her life, as with that of Miriam, often played out differently to these cultural prescriptions. She was, subsequently, often stigmatised:

My mother's sister, they shunned us out because my mother is a divorcee, they believe that you must stay in a marriage come hell or high water. []

It's hard because people treat you differently. Automatically er... they kind of feel sorry for you, and they look down upon you, like you can see this child's coming from a broken home. You know? And they'll always wait for you to fuck up or stuff up something. [] they'll say see this child, you know, her upbringing, her parents split up, see how they are. You know what I'm saying? Shame. That's not how I am. [Estelle]

Her inability to give herself and her child a “normal family” was a huge source of guilt that complicated her early recovery process:

It's guilt that I couldn't, I brought this child into this world and then I can't give her a home, I can't give her a happy home with a mother and father, and I'm giving her exactly what I had, a broken home. [Estelle]

For Estelle, her divorce was internalised as a failure to be the perfect wife. This served as another root factor in sustaining her addiction. She explains:

Because if he cheats on me with a man I will understand, you understand? Because I don't have what a man has to satisfy him. That's what I feel as a failure as a woman, because I'm not doing something right. That's what I thought to myself. I just didn't believe in divorce. I was like my family that didn't believe in divorce. I hated my mother for years for divorcing my father, and for allowing my sister and me to be this outcast to society, this outcast in families, functions, everybody with their family functions sitting with their father and their mother, me and my sister are leaning onto my uncle. [Estelle]

Adam, on the contrary, came from a loving and supportive home environment. His sense of belonging and affiliation within his peer group is in fact what, in his words,

“led to my destruction”. This affiliation created the façade of a loving, genuine friendship. As chief influences in sustaining his addiction, Adam communicates feelings of being betrayed and disappointed by people who he thought were his friends. He, consequently, speaks with much caution and distrust when addressing the idea and meaning of friendship. His recovery narrative, however, reflects an alternate experience of trusting affiliations and friendships, which he discovered through loving family bonds.

...we don't really believe there's such a thing as friends, because, there isn't really such a thing. There's maybe good people you know, and bad people you know, but if you look at actual friends that's your family because they stick through [with] you through thick and thin. I'm sure that works with everyone. They got what's in the best interest for you, whereas other people are just looking at what's best for that moment. So, ja, growing up in a supportive home makes a very, very big difference. [] ...my family are my friends [Adam]

While Estelle and Miriam were searching for external love and validation, all three participants' acknowledge the absence of self-love during their addiction. For Adam, this played out by the damaging impact his drug habit had on his physical wellbeing. For Estelle and Miriam, it played out through their negative self-evaluations and poor self-worth. Miriam acknowledges:

I don't think the scars on my body ... [laughing] expresses much of self-love.
[Miriam]

There appears to be a vast shift in this theme in their recovery narratives. A fundamental shift was a redirecting of the source of love, that is, rather than a search for love from external sources, the participants had to become their own source of love. The emergence of self-love within their recovery process reinforced a sense of control and self-reliance.

Adam describes choosing to seek rehabilitation when he realised the extent of the destruction he was causing his mind and body. This, a significant act of self-

love, was the “turning point” (McIntosh & McKeganey, 2000) that led to the re-authoring of his story and set the stage for authoring a narrative of recovery:

So we did the CT scan...came back a few days later and he told me the brain looks sorta like a 60 year old. I mean I wasn't even 20 at that time. [] he told me there's nothing I can do for you, I mean, you just gotta stop and give it time and, I guess, hopefully it will heal. [] It was terrible. It put me into a scare. [] And, uhm, I guess...I just wanted to call it quits you know. And I...I opened up all these bags of powder I had. It was quite a few thousand I mean, it was a lot of money I saved up...and I walked in the bathroom and I flushed it down. And I guess that, that was it for me you know. And I swore to myself that that's it. [Adam]

The theme of love was particularly dominant in Estelle's story. As previously discussed, Estelle's yearning for love and external validation was constant. She was repeatedly left feeling betrayed and disappointed by those from whom she expected love. Consequently, being repeatedly rejected by significant others left her questioning her self-worth and ability to be loved. She also became distrustful of others and developed a disbelief in love. Her ability to reconstruct the meaning of love gave her insight into alternate experiences of love that challenged her belief that she was unlovable. In exploring these alternate experiences, she identified the love shared between her and her daughter, and the love between her and her previous mother-in-law as significant sources of love. Additionally, she recalled a prayer that she shared with her grandmother while she was most vulnerable (during her final detox) as an experience of love. She explains:

My best friend, my mother, the one person who showed me what it felt to give love and receive love, my mother in law. [Estelle]

My granny prayed for me. [] I felt relieved, I felt that someone loves me enough to pray for me, she loves me enough to not give me that money and not for me to go back down the road, because I'm doing so well, I'm already on my third day of recovery, so she helped me. [Estelle]

And now my life is only focussed on me, myself and I, what makes me happy, what makes my child happy and what is good for her and what is going to benefit her. [Estelle]

Estelle's recovery narrative speaks to a greater sense of self-validation and a renewed focus on herself and her child as priorities. In this way, she no longer identified with the "tube-lighty" who was gullible and had to bend over backwards for others to her disadvantage.

The turning point within each of the participants' narratives are symbolic of a pivotal act of self-love which served as a catalyst in the reconstruction of their life narratives. Self-love gave rise to self-respect and self-validation; characteristics of the self that serve as important impetuses in sustaining recovery.

4.2.4.2 Acceptance

In his addiction narrative, Adam described himself as a "terrible person" who people feared. He spoke with much remorse when he described the person he was during his addiction. In exploring his self-concept during his recovery narrative, he expressed a greater sense of love towards himself and did not identify with that "terrible person". When asked about how he feels about the Adam he has become as a recovering addict, he described the following:

Oh I love him. He's awesome. I'm not trying to say that I'm obsessed with myself or anything, but I love the person I've become from where I was to where I've come...I love the person I am...I'm happy. [Adam]

Miriam's recovery narrative also depicts the relinquishing of her addiction identity. Along with her nomadic lifestyle during her addiction journey, Miriam gave herself different names and with it came different traits. As was postulated by Martin (2011), a drug addict's identity is also the product of the various living and identity practices they engage in during their journey of addiction. These different names were also important in her survival on the streets. She explains:

Street life was about not leaving your identity on the street. [] So in Bloemfontein people know me as Tia. In Kimberly, people know me as Lizzy, in Joburg they know me as Poison. In PE they know me as Abigail. No one knows Miriam. [Miriam]

Of most significance was the street name Poison, which she has tattooed on her wrist. Noteworthy is the fact that all other names were self-appointed. Poison, however, was a name given to her by others based on how they experienced her during that stage of her life. She described herself as a poisonous and manipulative person and eventually came to identify with that name during her addiction journey. In reconstructing her identity, it was apparent that Miriam no longer identified with that part of herself. Her process of identity reconstruction was solidified by her attempts to have her tattoo removed through laser therapy. For Miriam, an important component in her recovery journey is a reconnection with her authentic self. When asked if she still identifies with the name Poison, she explains:

But I am not that person. [I am] Miriam, Masha-Allah [Praise be to God]. Yoh! It means leader on the right path. [Miriam]

A pivotal element in the process of life and identity reconstruction following addiction was an acceptance rather than a rejection of their addiction narratives. Narrative therapists postulate that externalisation of the problem serves as a critical aspect in the healing process (Madigan, 2011; Weegmann, 2010). All the participants voiced the importance of separating themselves from their addiction. The participants' narratives reflected the ability to externalise, that is, to view addiction as a part of their life story, rather than a defining characteristic. The inclusion of addiction in their life narratives facilitates the process of re-authoring their current and future narratives by serving as a point of reference and an impetus in moving forward. Estelle encapsulates this sentiment in the following excerpt:

...keep your past in your rear-view mirror. [] So before you turn back, and make a U-turn, you're going to check that rear-view mirror, you're going to see your past, don't lock it up and keep it away in a tunnel or bottle it up. huh-

uh, keep it right there in front of your eyes, right there on top your rear-view mirror. In front of you but above you, so you can see it every now and then, and not forget where you came from, because if something happens and you decided to turn back, that is what you're going to. Is that what you really want to do, or would you rather go through this little storm that you're having now, because that storm is a tsunami, that will one day kill you. You can't keep on playing if you're going to turn back and go back down that memory lane, you see? [Estelle]

The above excerpt reverberates with Anderson's (2015) assumptions about stories of changes. Anderson (2015) postulates that a story of change may envision a past of extensive drug use through a present that is embedded in a process of recovery (or treatment) and further serving as an impetus toward a better future.

Acceptance of one's past allows for acceptance of oneself. Miriam and Estelle describe what self-acceptance means to them:

I would say self-acceptance is more like you see my scars, you see my tattoo, you see all this junk on me, yet I will walk around with a short sleeve and not care. And not in an arrogant kind of way. But just in a genuine, I don't care, it is who I am, it's where I am from. It's just knowing who you are and accepting who you are and who you were, not forgetting who you were. Not forgetting who you were. [Miriam]

I am proud to say I was in rehab. I go anywhere and my cousins ask me, so you was in rehab, I say yes. My mom says don't talk about it, I say why? Nobody helped me in rehab, none of my family helped me, not even you. I went, I smoked myself with my own money, I went and got myself clean with my own money, I did it on my own. I am proud of it. I am proud to be an addict, and I'm not ashamed of it. [Estelle]

It is apparent that self-acceptance further entails acknowledging oneself as a recovering addict. For Miriam and Estelle, it was important to embrace a recovering

addict identity as it served to inform their choices and their understanding of experiences along their recovery journey.

Knowing that I am an addict and I am in recovery is something that constantly needs to be in the back of my head. It is never to be forgotten because in that moment of ignorance.... In a blink of an eye it can all be over! Boundaries!!! Limits!!!! Boundaries!!! Limits!!!! Knowing where to get off, knowing when enough is enough, when not to push yourself over board, and to stop and breathe. These are things that are crucial to my recovery. [Miriam]

I'm a proud recovering drug addict... I say recovering 'coz if I don't protect myself, if I let my guard down.... If I allow myself to forget where I came from I'll end up right where I've started. [Estelle]

This sense of identity further informs the meaning of the experience of recovery for each participant. Both Miriam and Estelle's conceptualisation of recovery suggest that recovery is a life-long process or journey. Acknowledging recovery as a sustained status endorses the idea that recovery has the potential to shape personal identity and invoke meaning from having survived a potentially life-threatening condition (White, 2007).

Recovery means inner peace, belonging, conscience and patience. Recovery means responsible care and concern and taking full responsibility and accountability for every aspect of your life. It is a holistic transformation. A process of unlearning learnt behaviours and becoming socially accepted in the real world. [] Recovery is a day to day challenge, a constant battle between mind body and soul. [Miriam]

To me recovery means ongoing...forever and always. For example, I've been to NA, AA meetings, even though I don't agree with everything they teach, however in the same breath I do believe that recovery can best be described as a disease (by NA & AA teachings)... meaning life altering , life-threatening, life-long. [Estelle]

While Adam also acknowledges the importance of one's past serving as a reference point in motivating sustained recovery, he resonates less with the term recovering and more so with the term recovered. Of the three participants, Adam has been clean the longest, that is, ten years to date. His sense of confidence in his ability to lead a life of recovery stems from his continued ability to sustain a changed lifestyle characteristic of self-management, a sense of empowerment, and a general sense of mastery over his life. He describes himself as no longer being tempted or fearful of relapse, as his change in lifestyle has accompanied an acquisition of healthier coping mechanisms when dealing with emotionally charged and stressful experiences. Additionally, he describes being in a place where he no longer sees anything pleasurable in drugs, but has come to hate it. He believes that this is what makes one ready to assist others in their rehabilitation. His narrative is synonymous with the mastery story identified in the study conducted by Hänninen and Koski-Jaënnes (1999), characteristic of willpower and control.

You know, I think I've passed the recovery stage...I think I'm pretty much recovered. [] It means it doesn't bother me in any way anymore. I mean, you could be using and it wouldn't affect me. Recovery is a lot more than just leaving the drug. It's leaving the lifestyle that you lived. So it's gotta consist of a complete change. [] So it takes this amount of time where you can say this thing doesn't bother me anymore and you build that amount of strength where you actually learn to hate it. [Adam]

Furthermore, Adam's construction of a non-addict identity was made apparent by the distinction he occasionally made between himself and drug addicts. His choice of language in these instances reflects an intrinsic distancing from the addict identity he once identified with. His ability to associate his current behaviour with the rest of society, separate from drug addicts, appears to provide a sense of normalcy for him.

*And that's the problem with drug users coz **they** stuck in the subconscious mind which creates some sort of a blockage and then it becomes very difficult for them to do stuff. [] **they** try to find an excuse and **they** quite intelligent in a way, **they** know*

*how to make anyone believe their story. [] Now obviously **we** have the ability of choice and we can say that's not good for us so we'll just keep doing whatever we were doing. Whereas a guy using drugs doesn't have the ability of choice so he'll instantly go back to his drug of choice. [Adam]*

White (2007) suggests that full recovery from severe substance dependence is possible upon achievement of a level of durability, as appears to be experienced by Adam, in which the risk for relapse has been substantially reduced. Employing the term recovered reifies a sense of hope for recovery from severe substance dependence, for those directly and indirectly affected by addiction.

4.2.4.3 Forgiveness

The ability to forgive others and oneself was a dominant theme throughout all narratives. Acceptance and forgiveness appear to be intertwined such that forgiveness is made possible by the acceptance of one's past, just as one is able to accept the past once one has forgiven oneself and others.

I've forgiven everyone who's harmed me in my life you know, even if they influenced me or not because you can't forgive yourself if you don't forgive others. Now, if the Creator is the most powerful being there is you know, He's created everything, He's created everyone. If He can forgive us, who are we not to forgive. [] So you've sorta gotta let go. [] You sort of gotta forgive from your heart and say to yourself, you know what, I'm not gonna carry this with me. [] Without forgiveness you'll always hold that grudge and you'll always be stuck back. So to be free, forgiveness is a very major part. [Adam]

Miriam speaks about the fact that when one embarks on the road to recovery, the first thing to do is to confront the issues that drove one to drug addiction. In her story, she stressed that she had to start with forgiving her uncle who molested her when she was young.

This thing, this specific thing is the one thing in my life that has never allowed me to move on, it's what keeps me going back and it, it holds me back as well, and you know what I mean. And I got to a point in my life where if I didn't stop I was going to die. [] You need to just move forward because the more you going to dwell on it, you are not going to get anywhere. That's what I was doing all the time. I was dwelling on the fact that my uncle molested me and my family doesn't believe me, I was dwelling on, yeah, shit that happened to me out there, I would remember the shit and it would come back and play itself in my, it would play itself in my head and you know, and yoh and now its fine. [Miriam]

As discussed previously, Estelle perceived her addiction as stemming from a chase or search for answers. She took to drugs as a means of escaping emotional pain, as well as in an effort to understand why her husband appeared to value drugs more than her. Estelle's "turning point" emerged when she understood her husband's choices as she found herself in the same desperate captivity that accompanied addiction. It was in this moment that she forgave him. This act of forgiveness served as a defining catalyst in her road to recovery. She explains:

I forgave him and I understood why he did that. [] I understood why he spent most of his time in the gulley and not with me. I understood why he didn't want to be with me or carry my child. [] It's that er... you'll do anything for the drug, and I didn't blame him for stealing the clothes, I didn't blame him for... I got this X [points to scar on her face] because of him, I didn't blame him for my X, because I feel, I felt, I found what I was searching for. I feel...I was feeling for the drug, you understand? I felt ashamed to ask my granny for the money, and I found my answer as to why he was stealing, why he was doing everything, why he hit me for the money, because the way I was feeling, I was feeling so miserable, I was feeling so needy of this drug, I went and asked my granny for money. I won't do that, I won't. Because you must know, I'm all about name, I won't lower myself even more worse to go ask my granny for R20 to go buy the thing. But I did that, and I wasn't that kind of person. [Estelle]

Forgiveness and acceptance served as an emancipation from the captivity of addiction, which was brought about through a positive reinterpretation of their addiction narrative. At the outset, addiction was interpreted as having destroyed who they were in the past by steering them on a course of destruction. In the process of reconstruction, participants were able to derive alternate meaning from their addictive journeys. This allowed for the re-authoring of a narrative of destruction to a narrative of reparation and metamorphosis. The participants were able to renegotiate their past experience as a strength. The participants explain:

I wouldn't want to change a single thing because everything that I am today is because of who I was yesterday. [] I have come a long way in a sense that, besides the fact that I shouldn't be alive...I am living! I am at peace with myself and what has happened to me in the past. I no longer blame the world for my hatred and anger. I can no longer identify with rage. Although the past still haunts me, it no longer controls me. I am free, free from the chains that for many years held me captive. I am one with myself and I know what I want and I know where I want to be. I can finally say that I am ME! [Miriam]

I fucked up, I drugged, it was my path to follow to be the person I am today. I am honestly grateful I drugged, because if I hadn't drugged I would never have been this strong person, I would have still been walked upon all my life. [] I honestly have no regrets of my drugging...none at all. I believe that God has paved a way for us all to enter Heaven. The roads may not be the same... some may travel a longer road than most...but God Created me the way I am. I'm Unique. I have my life my story my message of hope my battle scars. My life may not be perfect but then again who is? I'M Alive I'm free from the captivity of drugs...I'm happy, I AM BLESSED. [Estelle]

As narrators of their experiences, the participants' appeared to communicate an element of expertise. This was apparent in their eagerness to educate the researcher on the dynamics of drug abuse, as well as in assisting the researcher's transition from "book smart to street smart" as Estelle suggested. Moreover, such expertise was seen as invaluable to assisting others with a shared narrative.

But you see you won't know these, you know textbook terminology, with withdrawal symptoms. But now that you're learning the words, when you really become professional in your field and you're counselling someone, you will know what you're talking about and you'll be able to use the languages they are using, and you won't be lost and that person won't be lost also, so I'll help you as far as I can. [Estelle]

I know all the ropes. I can help someone. [Adam]

Acceptance and forgiveness allowed for participants to assume an expert role, rather than one disenfranchised by shame and guilt. Identification with such a role reinforced a sense of empowerment and mastery.

4.2.4.4 Role acquisition

Recovery has brought with it the emergence of new roles as the participants have welcomed new experiences. These alternative roles have informed the process of reshaping their narrative identities (McAdams & McLean, 2013), as well as the shape and meaning attributed to their past, present and anticipated future narratives. These new roles appear to be an essential source of a sense of purpose and worth in the participants' lives.

Following the death of his father, Adam assumed the role of the head of the family and the family business. He recalls the guilt he experienced during the inception of his recovery journey, on account of the impact that his addiction had on his family and especially on his relationship with his father. His ability to rebuild a meaningful relationship with his father during his recovery and before his father's death, as well as his ability to serve as a protector and provider, has afforded Adam with an opportunity at redemption, and provided him with a sense of purpose.

The thing is, when I lost him, I didn't have that much regret, I can live with it because even though I messed up in my life...now that he's gone and I'll never see him again 'til we meet in paradise, pretty much, I don't have any regret, I can actually live with it coz while he was here I spent that time with

him. You've built that good relationship. I've managed to fix what I had to.
[Adam]

For Adam and Estelle, entrenched within their non-addict identity is their identification with parenthood. Both participants communicated a yearning to be worthy role models for their children, where their children served as motivating factors to lead better lives. The interviews with these participants were characteristic of stories and photographs shared about their children and at other times, their children were physically present. Adam explains:

Ja, you know...he's my reason to...to keep living in life. He gives me a lot of strength. [] When I heard she was pregnant, it sorta gave me a chance to pick up again where I knew I had to pull up my socks and do what I have to. So ja, he changes my life totally, it's an amazing feeling. There's never a dull moment in life. [Adam]

Miriam's addiction narrative depicts an addict who was ostracised by her family on account of her criminal behaviour. She recalls receiving demeaning looks from family, and instances when her family would scatter, frantically attempting to hide their possessions from her. Her recovery narrative, on the contrary, tells a story of a trusted and valued family member. This new role appears to represent an important source of self-worth for Miriam, such that it has informed her experience of recovery and the meaning she derives from it:

What it [recovery] truly means to me though is trust. Being in recovery is tough on all levels, but what gets me through it every single day is trust. Being trusted! Knowing that I can be relied on, knowing that I belong, and knowing that my existence matters and I am not frowned upon anymore. [] Today I run the family business and have control over all the cash. Today I am a respected trusted human being. Not a criminal, not a low life good for nothing thief. [Miriam]

4.2.5 Purposiveness

I was a broken up person, empty. [Miriam]

My family plays a very major role coz it keeps you going all the time, makes you wanna do more in your life, makes you wanna achieve more in your life. My work also keeps me busy and I enjoy doing what I do. [Adam]

Having my very own child... [] to be very honest that's the only thing that kept me going strong. [Estelle]

In the first excerpt, Miriam relays a sense of emptiness and hopelessness that reflected across all participants' narratives of addiction. This alludes to a sense of stuckness in a cycle of destruction that stemmed from their addiction. Participants paralleled this meaningless phase of their lives to death. Recovery fostered a renewed sense of meaning that emerged from having a sense of purpose and value in their reconstructed lives. This is reflected in the excerpt by Adam who found meaning in being a father, husband, and head of family, and by Estelle who found meaning in life through motherhood. A renewed sense of purpose and meaning accompanied a reshaping of the participants' sense of self, a sense of hope in the pursuit of recovery, as well as a sense of satisfaction with life. This is consistent with research on meaning-making, and highlights the fundamental value of establishing a meaningful life story in human functioning (Crescioni & Baumeister, 2013; Steger et al., 2008; Wong, 2012).

Adam highlighted that focusing on the future will give one the power to keep going. The past, according to him, should only serve as reference point. He went on to explain that one needs to have a purpose in life, built through having a vision. Then it is chasing the dream/vision that keeps one going.

Yeah, you know what, there's hope. You gotta just go on. You can either sit or complain or you can just keep flying, it's up to you...So people need to have a vision and say, okay, you have to dream. Dreaming is very important. I have the most amazing dreams and I love to dream. You have your dream

and you say I'm gonna achieve this dream coz any dream is made to become true if you really want it. I set dreams that are so high, I don't think they'll ever come true. If they had to come through I think I'd scare myself, to be honest with you, but it gives me that direction to work on, it gives the hope to go on. And then you sort of say okay, the first step for me to achieve this dream or goal is to go in this direction in life, and then you just take one step and that one step will reveal the next step for you. [Adam]

It emerged in Miriam's story that having a purpose in life has aided her recovery process. It was that purpose in life that kept her going. Running the family business along with her father, provided an opportunity to rebuild their relationship following both their addictive journeys, as well as a sense of responsibility to see it prosper. This comes out when she says:

Uhm I, I, what is basically keeping me together, that is what you are asking me right, what is holding me together, the business firstly... [] But it's, it's really keeping me together because I need to see this place prosper. Uhm between myself and my father we have put a lot into this. Miriam.

Recovery allowed for the construction of a purposeful life narrative. Purposiveness, which is achieved through the pursuit and fulfilment of salient life goals, is postulated to be a vital need in the acquisition of meaning (Sommer et al., 2012; Steger, 2012). The subthemes of faith and altruism serve to inform the participants' sense of purpose in constructing their narratives of recovery.

4.2.5.1 Faith

Faith is a, it's a very big pillar you know. You'd be totally lost without it. [Adam]

Faith and spirituality have been associated with positive mental health outcomes (Hill & Pargament, 2008; Pardini, Plante, Sherman, Stump, 2000). Such outcomes include increased coping, greater resilience to stress and negative emotionality, greater perceived social support, a sense of purpose and hope, and an

optimistic life orientation (Al-Omari, Hamed, Abu Tariah, 2015; Hackney & Sander, 2003; Hill & Pargament, 2008; Koenig, 2009). Similarly, individuals recovering from substance abuse place importance on identifying with a higher power, a belief in God, and a strong sense of faith (Laudet, 2003; Robinson, Krentzman, Webb, Brower, 2011; White & Laudet, 2006). Similar to the studies cited here, participants in the present study acknowledged the impact that faith has had as a coping mechanism, as well as in being a provider of hope and a motivator in sustaining change.

In exploring the turning point in his life, Adam attributed the genesis of his recovery narrative to a prayer. For Adam, he's faith has been instrumental in his recovery and he firmly believes that God answered his prayer and saved him from further destruction. He relates one of the visions he had while undergoing Ibogaine treatment:

I remember the one vision that I've seen...I saw the devil and it was sorta a cliff, a beautiful green cliff, there was a tree, and I was walking towards this cliff and as it went down there was just this fire, which I guess was hell. Uhm, and then what happened was, there was this gold which came from the sky which was written Allah [God] in it...and the devil was waiting to throw, to push me into the fire, and it sorta just gripped the devil and threw him into the fire and I ended up in safety. [] I guess it was trying to tell me, which kind of signified something in my own life to me, to tell me, you know what...I was on my way to hell and you know what, there was just a second chance for me...so Allah [God] came by, He protected me from this and He's given me a second chance to go and do whatever I had to. [Adam]

According to Estelle, this faith does not have to be big. She described her faith as follows:

I believe in the hair strand faith, my own... my own thing because I never really had faith, up till today my faith is still weak but even it can be as thin as our hair strand, as thin as a hair strand, as long as it is there and you believe in something greater than yourself, there is something there, and you can pray to Him and He will make a way for you. [] I believe in God but I believe that He gave me so much in my life, and my miracle child is my Atiya and He

helped me through my drug addiction because even in NA [Narcotics Anonymous] they tell you, believe in something greater than yourself. [Estelle]

Similarly, Miriam asserts the importance of faith in her trajectory to recovery when she says:

Uhm even when I was, you know out there on the streets or whatever, surah Fathiya [a fundamental prayer in Islam] was always with me. It was like it was, it was there. But I would fight it myself. Uhm, so, so I wouldn't say, I would say I was fighting my faith. I would say that, I was fighting it. But I know it was there. [Miriam]

As previously mentioned, the participants likened the hopelessness experienced during their addiction to death. Miriam's addiction narrative, in particular, reflected this.

I cannot count the amount of times I cheated death. The amount of times I stared death in the eyes and then just turned my back and walked away. Why did death always let me get away? Why did death never take me? I was moving so much around that I even lost track of myself. I would have so much drugs that it would literally be falling out of my hair. Other times I would find myself walking on the highway to where ever at early hours of the morning. I had a death wish but death didn't want me. [Miriam]

Notwithstanding this death wish which often lead Miriam to intentionally seek out detrimental experiences and relationships, her narrative communicates an abstruse fight to stay alive. She attributes this underlying fight for survival to a celestial intervention which confirms her worth and significance and creates hope in leading a purposeful life.

I should not be alive to today, there is a higher power that was looking out for me. [] There was something protecting me all along. There was, yoh, I was protected. And it was not a person. It really wasn't a person. And looking

back at it now, I would say definitely. That is why I feel that there is a, a very big purpose for my life. There is something that should happen in my life at some stage. I am not going to chase it, because I don't know what it is. But something is going to happen in my life where I will realise why I am alive you know. Why, why I kept going, what I kept fighting for because I mean, honestly at that time I had nothing to fight for, you know what I am saying, there was nothing to fight for, there was no family, there was no, nothing, there was absolutely nothing, why did I fight. You understand so, one day, I don't have that answer. So one day I will have that answer. [Miriam]

The participants also characterised their addiction as a phase in which they felt detached from their religious or spiritual beliefs, which rendered them directionless and isolated. Their addiction and the lifestyle that accompanied it contradicted their religious faith principles. Recovery accompanied a transformed reconnection and spiritual relationship, and served as an opportunity to redeem themselves. Adam explains:

I guess we all going to be questioned on it [by God] so the thing is, what do you answer in that I've abused my body and I've done all of this you know. When you know you going to the One who created you. Now at least I can go back and say, you know what, I made a difference. [Adam]

4.2.5.2 Altruism

Man helping man to help himself. [Miriam]

The above excerpt, a principle from one of the rehabilitation programmes that Miriam engaged in, epitomises a common theme reflected in all participants' narratives. The ability to be of service, to be purposeful, to contribute to the upliftment of another and specifically to assist other drug addicts in choosing, authoring, and maintaining a recovery narrative. Philanthropy appeared to be a major source of purpose in pursuit of a meaningful post-addiction life. Jacobson and Greenley (2001) are of the opinion that altruistic initiatives serve as an opportunity to validate and reconcile the recovering addict's own experiences.

Adam was actively involved in a community drug watch and support forum within his local community. Estelle had previously volunteered at a drug rehabilitation centre and was involved in a local community upliftment programme. Miriam's desire to be philanthropic was thwarted by a fear of relapse that accompanied previous attempts at assisting other addicts in their rehabilitation. Her involvement in this study, although voluntary, initially accompanied this fear. Her ability to contribute to this project reaffirmed her identification with her new identity (i.e. recovering addict) and her sense of self-efficacy in leading a life of recovery. She communicated a sense of self-trust and confidence, which has since encouraged her involvement in other social development projects. She explains:

From writing a little of my life story to then explaining the process... I have learned that I am not doing so badly at all. In fact, I have gained so much from this exercise that I have been given a chance to really see my growth. To really see just how far I actually have come on this journey. It has opened my eyes to what greatness I can achieve and what I can accomplish in my life.

[Miriam]

While all efforts to upholding confidentiality were maintained throughout this research endeavour, confidentiality and anonymization appeared to be a value more salient for the researcher than the participants. The participants were not concerned about remaining anonymous. For them, they had a story to tell which they hoped would allow other drug addicts a level of relatedness and hope in the possibility of a life of recovery.

I don't mind if someone's listening [laughs]. I actually went on a radio station a couple of years ago. They wanted to know about my life and whatever. I spoke on the radio about it. [] You see I, I always said that my purpose you know is to help... I know I can help a lot of people and do a lot of things, in people's lives you know to impact them in some positive way. [Miriam]

...the counselling really...you know when you can take someone who was where I was, the destructive state of life, and you can bring them to the normal

state of life...you know what, it's priceless. I guess that's wealth, that's what makes me happy. [] I wanna give back you know. [] And I guess, that's the only reason why I came here, because maybe somewhere, some day, somehow, someone might read something that you wrote and it changes just one person's life, and that's priceless. [Adam]

I have a chance to help the suffering I can do something about their situation, I want to give hope to the hopeless I want to be that friend that sister that family member to support them in they time of struggle, I want to be everything I wished for myself at that time, I never got it but I can give it. [] So now wherever I can, I do my best to help people, I share my story with whoever needs to be shared to, because I honestly believe somewhere along the line it's going to help somebody, even if it helps one person, I'm happy, my job is done because I've changed one life, that one life will change somebody else's. [Estelle]

In their narration of their experiences of addiction, it was apparent that addiction characterised a stage of intense egocentrism and decisions that adversely affected their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. To this end, their altruistic endeavours served as a means of redemption, as Adam explains:

I guess we all going to be questioned on it [by God] so the thing is, what do you answer in that I've abused my body and I've done all of this you know. When you know you going to the One who created you. Now at least I can go back and say, you know what, I made a difference. [Adam]

An important facet within their philanthropic work was the aspect of relatedness. In exploring their experience of Ibogaine treatment, it became apparent that in addition to the rehabilitation programme, the participants' ability to relate to the head of the rehabilitation centre, and likewise his ability to relate to the participants' experience as a reformed addict himself, positively facilitated their rehabilitation process.

So, ja, I did, I did hit the bottom of the bottom, if I could put it to you that way. And I guess, that's why when I help people now, it sort of makes a difference because they know, okay, this guy was once right in the dumps and he managed to pull himself out...that means there is hope for me. [] And I said I believe I can help youz and guide youz because how are you gonna stop someone from taking drugs if you've never took drugs yourself? How can you stop someone from smoking weed if you've never smoked a pipe? You can't do it because you wouldn't know what that person is going through you know. [Adam]

You know Doc, he was an ex addict. He would understand best what I'm talking about and I would understand best what somebody else is going through. Now you through our experience will understand where someone else is coming, and you can relate to other people who's coming around from the same background. [Estelle]

By standing as living exemplars of the possibility of recovery, participants are able to serve as role models, or recovery “champions” (Best & Laudet, 2010; Jacobson & Greenley, 2001). Participants were able to make sense of their past addiction narratives by seeing it as a tool that fosters a level of relatedness and genuineness in assisting other drug addicts. In this way, participants were able to find meaning and value in an otherwise destructive phase of their lives. Furthermore, altruism reinforced the acceptance of their addiction narrative and their reformed sense of self.

4.2.6 Support as recovery capital

A persistent thread woven through research on recovery from mental health problems, and specifically substance abuse, is the role played by supportive structures, which can either benefit or threaten the recovery process (Hänninen and Koski-Jaënnes, 1999; Rassool, 2011; Watson & Parke, 2011; White & Laudet, 2006). Social capital is described as a key component of recovery capital, that is, the sum of resources necessary to facilitate sustained recovery from substance abuse (Best &

Laudet, 2010; White & Cloud, 2008). Social capital refers to the sum of resources that a recovering addict has resulting from supportive relationships and the accompanying mutually obligatory roles they fulfil within these relationships (Cloud & Granfield, 2009).

The addiction narratives of the participants communicated deficits in healthy supportive relationships, largely due to self-sabotaging and family dysfunction. The participants appeared isolated and lacked a sense of belonging and family cohesion. All participants communicated a need for support in sustaining recovery. For Adam and Miriam, their re-authoring process entailed a more connected and cohesive family dynamic, wherein they were valued as having particular roles to fulfil within their familial structure. This contributed to their sense of belonging and purpose. Estelle's recovery narrative, on the contrary, reflected no change in family dynamics. The shift, however, was her ability to be her own source of love and acceptance, as well as her ability to form healthy friendships which served as a source of social capital. The impact that social capital has on the recovery process was made apparent in the participants' narratives. Estelle's narrative identified family dysfunction, and more specifically, the dysfunctional relationship with her mother as a major challenge in her recovery and a contributing factor to her previous relapse.

She's the main reason why I lapsed, because two weeks before my 28th birthday, she told me I'm a failure as a woman, I'm a failure as a mother because I'm living in my room, that I lived in when I was in school, I have a child, I brought my child to her, I can't even get my own place and live on my own. [Estelle]

I've changed, I'm clean but the world is exactly the same. [] the dents are all there, the smokers are still smoking, my mother hasn't changed, you understand? The biggest challenge for any addict is themselves because you are getting clean, the gulley is still there, it's still a gulley. [Estelle]

The above excerpt highlights the challenge faced by an individual in recovery from drug addiction when change is exclusively individualised, without the inclusion of a simultaneous change in environmental and social supportive structures. The idea of

macro-level systemic change (White, 2007) is a view shared by all the participants in this study. Adam explains:

So for a person who's trying to stop...I guess he's staying with his wife or his parents...I guess they also have a particular role in helping the person succeed in their life, in recovery. [] you also gotta play a role in supporting them, in growing a relationship, and help them start a new lifestyle. [Adam]

This view identifies supportive structures as salient influential characters in the authoring of recovery narratives. Such a view supports the shift from the traditional focus of recovery as an individual process, to one that makes apparent the interconnectedness between the individual, the family, and the community (White, 2007). Best and Laudet (2010) postulate that in the development of intervention programmes and policies aimed at promoting recovery, one needs to re-evaluate an exclusive focus on the addict (or recovering addict) as this underestimates the impact of interpersonal sources of recovery and recovery communities.

4.3 Conclusion

The participants' narratives of addiction in this study communicated a great sense of emptiness or meaninglessness. A search for meaning, amidst being faced with intense isolation and a struggle to find value in their existence, was apparent in their narratives. Their narratives of recovery echoed the gaining of meaning and could be seen in the emergence of a sense of self-worth (such as establishing a sense of belonging and being seen as a valuable family member), the pursuit of a goal (in addition to sobriety, the pursuit of being an exemplary father or motherly figure), self-justification which emerged largely from a spiritual/religious reconnection, and a sense of efficacy which stemmed primarily from being able to exercise control over their lives and more so, over their addiction and recovery process. Shifts in meaning-making was made possible by the participants' ability to reinterpret their experiences, and thereby, re-author their life narratives.

To an extent, the participants' recovery narratives also performed as a redemption script in that it allowed for the rewriting of a shameful past into a necessary

prelude to a productive and worthy life. In this way, “the good emerges out of the bad” (Maruna, 2010, p. 98) or as articulated by Adam, “the worst pasts create the best futures”. Through the process of life narrative reconstruction and meaning-making, participants’ were able to make sense of their past by enabling their present and future selves to do something better.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

At any given moment, you have the power to say: "This is not how the story is going to end."

(Christine Mason Miller)

Qualitative research unfolds within the realm of intersubjectivity, that is, a context in which the mutual interaction between the researcher and the researched generate new insights and meanings that are bound by time and place (Shaw, 2010). In this way, the researcher's role as a co-creator of realities and knowledge thereof, necessitates reflexivity in research. Reflexivity acknowledges how the researcher's subjectivity may influence and shape the research process and interpretations (Ortlipp, 2008). This chapter will include a discussion on reflexivity along three domains: personal, epistemological, and methodological reflexivity (Chamberlain, 2004; Lynch, 2000; Willig, 2013). The strengths and limitations of the study are integrated into these reflections.

Incorporated into the concluding thoughts, are insights and recommendations for clinical practice, as well as future research. For the purposes of reflective authenticity, and in reinforcing the subjectivity of these reflections, I, the researcher, will employ a first person narrative in this chapter.

5.1 Reflecting on the study

Willig (2013), postulates two types of reflexivity. Firstly, personal reflexivity, constitutes a reflection on how the personal ideological, value, and cultural systems, and experiences of the researcher may impact the research process (Willig, 2013). This also includes a reflection on how the research may have affected or changed the researcher. A second type of reflexivity addresses the epistemological assumptions (about the world and knowledge) of the researcher and how this may have shaped the research process and findings (Willig, 2013). As a third form of reflexivity; methodological reflexivity, entails a reflection on the methods used in conducting the

research (Chamberlain, 2004; Lynch, 2000). Reflections will be discussed along these three domains.

5.1.1 Personal reflexivity

My decision to pursue a thesis in the field of addiction and recovery was both personally and professionally motivated. As a psychologist in training, my practical placements afforded me the opportunity to work at a drug rehabilitation centre. I became intrigued by the journeys taken by the clients that I worked with, and my curiosity to gain a richer understanding of addiction and recovery arose. During the course of my studies, this interest took on a personal meaning when addiction became my reality. Addiction had become a key character in the life of one of my immediate family members, which in turn, had an influence on our familial narrative and our individual life narratives. This experience was a pivotal turning point in our lives and the dynamics of our family, as it required a restructuring of our understandings of our familial roles, self-identities, as well as religious, cultural, and social identities and beliefs. The reality of my family member who was directly impacted by drug addiction and the process of transition that accompanied recovery, became a shared reality, with multiple 'turns in the road' as we journeyed from addiction to recovery.

My experience within a supportive capacity, exposed me to various rehabilitation and aftercare support structures, which, consequently, allowed me to interact with and co-exist in the realities and stories of other recovering addicts. I found their narratives to be intrinsically unique, yet relatable among each other. The richness of their stories were, for a psychologist in training and a family member to a recovering addict, value-full and unique to my didactic knowledgebase. Additionally, this experience further opened my eyes to the extent of drug-related issues that my community faces. In a community entrenched in cultural and traditional moral codes of conduct, drug addiction and other 'non-conforming' behaviours often go unresolved for fear of stigmatisation. These experiences furthered my curiosity in gaining a better understanding of this field.

Initially, I was concerned about the impact that my experience may have on the research process. Qualitative research allowed for my subjectivity to be included in the research process. My experience, on the contrary, became a tool in the research

process. The participants appeared to share their stories more openly upon understanding my motivations for pursuing the research endeavour. My experience appeared to foster a sense of relatedness, genuineness, and a shared reality.

Prior to embarking on this study, I did not engage critically with discourses related to addiction. The research fostered my ability to think critically in understanding how knowledge is produced, and made me more aware of the veiled processes and ideologies that constitute the social world. I also became more mindful of my own assumptions and prejudices regarding individuals affected by drug addiction. I have, for a long time, felt internally conflicted by my own views and the predominant discourse that prevailed within my local community regarding addiction. This discourse imposed judgement on the moral conduct of addicts within my community, who were seen as sinful as addiction was associated with immorality. It also had ramifications on the family of the addict, as they were pitied and associated with a sense of failure as an ideal family. I was particularly disturbed by the injurious impact such social discourses had on those impacted by addiction, and especially, on the recovering-addict. As a strong advocate of self-will and choice, prior to this study, I believed that even an addict has a choice in sustaining their addiction. The findings of this study has made me more sensitive to the extent to which physiological and psychological dependency diminishes choice, and can render an individual feeling powerless and voiceless. Furthermore, the process made me more compassionate towards those affected by addiction, and those attempting to pursue rehabilitation.

In addition, I was able to relate to the participants' stories on another level. Having initiated my studies towards my Masters in Counselling Psychology in 2012, I embarked with a clear vision of what my academic, professional, and personal journey would entail. This, however, did not come to fruition, with numerous deadlocks along the way, I found myself stuck in a life narrative that questioned my personal and professional identity. After multiple transitional experiences, I was able to reclaim control and power over this process and re-author my narrative. In this way, I was able to relate to the experience of growing from stagnation, reconstructing my relationship with myself and my academic process, and reinstating my purpose and childhood motivation for choosing the profession of psychology. This entry is by no means intended to trivialise the experiences of the participants. Instead, it is hoped that this reflection will highlight the fluidity of reality, the existence of multiple realities and ways

of understanding and meaning-making, as well as the ability of stories to foster relatedness and meaning in human existence.

5.1.2 Epistemological reflexivity

This study explored the lived experiences of recovering addicts from a postmodern social constructionist perspective. This perspective asserts the subjectivity of reality, such that knowledge and meaning is socially constructed and open to multiple interpretations. Consequently, the stories people tell are informed by the social and cultural milieus in which they are embedded.

By adopting such an epistemological lens, I became more mindful of the unseen processes at play in knowledge production in the social world. This encouraged a critical engagement with knowledge and phenomena that I may encounter as an individual within social contexts, and as a therapist. As a therapist, it has made me more cognisant of latent factors within clients' narrative environments (as well as my own internal idiosyncratic and therapeutic discourses) and how these may influence my clients' lives and the therapeutic process. In terms of professional development, this lens also helped foster a sensitivity to my role as co-constructor in the therapeutic process of change. I am more cognisant of how singular hegemonic "truths" may in fact, in establishing normative narratives, create problematic narratives that are counter-conducive to human functioning and therapeutic success. In conducting the analysis, I remained attentive to the presence of such social discourses and how they may have shaped the participants' narratives.

This epistemological position also encourages an openness and curiosity on the part of the researcher. My desire to understand the experiences of the participants, and with their encouragement, motivated me to experience Ibogaine first-hand. In consideration of the fact that it is a natural herbal substance and that it would be administered in a significantly reduced dose, I was able to obtain a glimpse into the effect of this treatment. While I cannot comment on the experience related to withdrawal symptoms, I have gained insight into the panoramic fleet of thoughts, and the sense of serene clarity on a cognitive and emotional level, agreeably described as "refreshed" and "anew", as conveyed in the participants' narratives.

Social constructionism exemplifies a collaborative and respectful framework of dialogue between the researcher and participant. Such thinking reflects the possibility for both parties to influence difference and change. As a co-creator, I believe that I co-constructed alternative experiences that opened opportunities for change and growth, and new meaning. Such opportunities can be seen as reciprocal in the space of a shared reality.

5.1.3 Methodological reflexivity

The present study employed a narrative inquisition into the experiences of recovering addicts as they journeyed from addiction to recovery. A narrative thematic analysis allowed me to elucidate how themes transitioned over time and context which facilitated the restructuring of life narratives and meaning. This methodology provided a platform for the voices of recovery addicts to be heard. It also functioned as a framework in which I was able to analyse and produce explanatory stories from a mass of data so as to incite a deep understanding of the experiences of recovering addicts, while still keeping their stories intact.

The findings of this study cannot be considered as exhaustive or an absolute truth regarding the experience of recovering addicts in general, nor of the individual participants' lives. The outcome of the study can be better understood as the result of a co-constructed reality, informed and shaped by the sharing and telling of stories between myself, theory, the expertise of the participants, and the unseen social and individual discourses at play within the social context. The findings of the study, therefore, cannot be generalised. The study was not intended to be generalizable. Instead, the intent was to explore and elucidate idiosyncratic narratives that are rich with experience and personal meaning. The methodological approach used facilitated this process.

The exploration of such rich storied experiences posed the risk for potential distress due to the emotionally sensitive recollections. I remained attentive to any signs of such distress that may have been experienced by participants, throughout the research process. Narrative inquiry encourages a non-judgemental curiosity in exploring narratives. Additionally, narrative interviewing necessitates following participants down their trail. In approaching the research with an openness to

understanding experience, and allowing myself to travel along the participants' journeys rather than forcing them into exploring elements of their narratives they may have been uncomfortable to share, I believe I created a narrative space in which participants felt safe to engage in conversational exploration of their storied experiences.

Clandinin and Caine (2008) denote that there are two important aspects of narrative inquiry – “listening to individuals tell their stories and living alongside participants as they live their stories” (p. 543). This sentiment resonates with my experience during my research journey. In engaging with the participants, I was taken into parts of their lives that no textbook could have educated me on. Not only did the participants share their stories with me, but they included me in the ‘living out’ of their narratives. My experience highlighted the relational nature of narrative, as I was welcomed into the cultural and social narratives within which these participants’ individual narratives are embedded. I experienced narrative inquiry as a way of living in the field and as such, research becomes a part of life. A sentiment shared by Clandinin and Caine (2008).

“Narrative inquirers see change as part of the process of narrative inquiry” (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 5). Research inquiry facilitates the retelling of stories which, in turn, facilitates a reinterpretation of experiences. This, subsequently, enables change in meaning and identities. Additionally, new theoretical understandings emerge, which inform social, cultural, and institutional narratives. Resultantly, narrative research fosters individual as well as social change. In the present study, it became apparent that as participants narrated their stories, a process of renegotiating their experiences was at work, which facilitated shifts in meaning and in their self-concepts. This could be seen, for instance, in the way in which they renegotiated a shameful past into one that provided a sense of strength and an identification with expertise.

Another positive feature of narrative research is its belief that people are the experts of their own lives (Madigan, 2011; Weegmann, 2010). It was important for me that the participants experienced this research process as empowering and an opportunity to be heard. As discussed (please refer to Chapter 4), the narratives

communicated a sense of expertise as recovering addicts reinterpreted their past addiction.

5.2 Concluding statements and recommendations for future research

The limited academic South African based knowledge on the experience of addiction and recovery revealed a gap in knowledge. Current South African literature was primarily modernistic, and focused predominantly on cause-and-effect knowledge in the field of addiction and rehabilitation.

The results of the present study provide insight into the lived experience of individuals who have experienced addiction and recovery journeys. The study highlights the value of narratives in the process of meaning making and rehabilitation. A narrative approach to research inquiry and analysis appears to be of benefit in investigating phenomena within the field of psychology. Not only does it serve as a cathartic experience for the researched, but as experiences are reinterpreted through the retelling of stories, narratives, identities, and meanings attached to them are being reconstructed. Additionally, it allows for a humane interaction between researcher and participant, synonymous with person centred interactions within clinical or therapeutic contexts.

This study served to voice the experiences of three recovering addicts. Through this process, detailed accounts of lived experience was made visible which identified pivotal transitions in relation to power, control, and selfhood. These transitions fostered new insights and shifts in meaning, which ultimately resulted in a sense of empowerment and purposiveness as recovering addicts pursued narratives of recovery.

A further gap within South African literature was academic knowledge on the experiences of individuals who have undergone Ibogaine-assisted rehabilitation. As a catalyst in the restructuring of participants' narratives, the results suggest that Ibogaine may hold some value in rehabilitative interventions. In consideration of the extent of drug-related problems within South Africa, the field of addiction research within South Africa may benefit from further research regarding its effectiveness as a therapeutic tool in the treatment of substance dependence (and other addictions).

Noteworthy are the findings that reflect a therapeutic value in relatedness and altruism which suggest important considerations for the field of addiction treatment. Addicts in recovery can be seen as assets, experts, or recovery capital (Best & Laudet, 2010), such that they allow for a therapeutic connectedness fostered through an element of relatedness, that trained professionals in the field may not always be able to provide. Additionally, the ability to give of oneself in service of others appears to hold some therapeutic value in the recovering addict's own recovery process. In this way, it appears to encourage and reaffirm the recovering addict's sense of self-efficacy, identification with a reconstructed ex-addict identity, their sense of control and empowerment, a sense of redemption, and overall, an improved feeling of mastery over their lives in the process of authoring a narrative of recovery.

From a clinical perspective, these findings raise the question of inclusion. Could recovering addicts serve a role within a multidisciplinary team aimed at treating addiction disorders? Can their experiential expertise and relatedness compliment professional expertise within rehabilitative contexts? This of course raises considerations regarding the recovering addict's readiness to serve within a therapeutic capacity (an in turn, reinforce their own recovery process), as well as the degree of recovery durability (White, 2007). While these suggestions may seem somewhat revolutionary and non-traditional, there may be value in considering and researching such inclusion in relation to clinical objectives within the realm of addiction treatment.

Furthermore, such findings challenge the current role and position of addicts and recovering addicts within social and institutional milieus. Rather than being seen as a problem, these individuals can be seen as vital stakeholders in devising solutions to the problem. Their narratives of experience provide idiosyncratically rich sources of knowledge that could inform community initiatives related to drug awareness and rehabilitative support, as well as institutional policies aimed at primary, secondary and tertiary interventions in addressing drug addiction within South Africa.

AN ADDICT FELL IN A HOLE

An addict fell in a hole and couldn't get out.

A businessman went by and the addict called out for help. The businessman threw him some money and told him to buy himself a ladder. But the addict could not find a ladder in this hole he was in.

A doctor walked by. The addict said, "Help! I can't get out!" The doctor gave him some drugs and said, "Take this. It will relieve the pain." The addict said thanks, but when the pills ran out, he was still in the hole.

A well-known psychiatrist rode by and heard the addict's cries for help. He stopped and asked, "How did you get there? Were you born there? Did your parents put you there? Tell me about yourself, it will alleviate your sense of loneliness." So the addict talked with him for an hour, then the psychiatrist had to leave, but he said he'd be back next week.

The addict thanked him, but he was still in the hole.

A priest came by and heard the addict calling for help. The priest gave him a Bible and said, "I'll say a prayer for you." He got down on his knees and prayed for the addict, then left. The addict was very grateful, and read the whole Bible, but he was still stuck in the hole.

A recovering addict happened to be passing by. The addict cried out, "Hey, help me. I'm stuck in this hole!" Right away the recovering addict jumped down in the hole with him.

The addict said, "What are you doing? Now we're both stuck here!" But the recovering addict said, "It's okay, I've been here before. I know the way out."

- Anonymous

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YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Department of Psychology

APPENDIX A: LETTER TO REHABILITATION CENTRE AND INFORMED CONSENT

Title of the study:

A narrative inquiry into the experiences of recovering drug addicts

Research conducted by:

Name: Fatima Kurtha

Student #: 04310829

Cell: 072 414 7734

Email: tima.kurtha@gmail.com

Dear

I am a postgraduate psychology student and a registered intern psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa. I am undertaking research for a Masters Degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of Pretoria. A component of my course involves the completion of a dissertation. I am conducting research that explores the experiences of individuals who have been through the process of drug addiction and recovery. In a world that is absorbed by statistical and causative conceptions of social phenomena, there appears to be a need, specifically in South Africa, to understand the personal accounts and meaning involved in drug addiction and recovery.

Purpose and

Process:

The study aims to explore the unique experiences of recovering drug addicts as conveyed in their narratives of addiction and recovery. In essence, the study aims to provide a platform for the unheard voices of recovering drug

addicts to be heard and to explore their experiences and meaning-making in the process of reconstructing their lives. This will be done by asking the participants to write about their most significant experiences in their journey through drug addiction and recovery. This may then be followed by an individual interview should the researcher need to clarify and further explore information that was provided in the autobiographies.

**Role of
Institution:**

Your role in the study would be in a sourcing capacity. The participants that I am trying to recruit would have undergone rehabilitative treatment (be it in an in-patient or out-patient capacity) with your institution. The study is concerned with exploring the recovery process as perceived by the persons themselves. The study requires *three to six participants* who should be selected based on their voluntary willingness to participate, and based on the fact that they have completed a drug rehabilitation programme with your institution. The candidates need to be literate in the English language. You would be required to provide the information sheet and consent form to all candidates, a minimum of eight that you identify as eligible for the proposed research endeavour. Thereafter, in an effort to further uphold confidentiality, at least three candidates who contact the researcher will be recruited for the proposed study. Furthermore, you would be requested to give permission to interviews being held at your institution.

Confidentiality:

No identifying information will be revealed in any discussion, description, supervision or publications by the researcher. Alternate names will be used to protect the identity of each participant. Confidentiality will extend to the name of the rehabilitation centre (which will not be specified).

Information:

The dissertation will be distributed in hardcopy and electronic formats on academic platforms. The data will also be archived.

Academic papers may also utilise the information, which may also be used for further research purposes. In the writing up of results the names of all participants will be kept confidential and any identifying information will be disguised. Your institution will also have the opportunity to view the findings should you request to.

Risks: The research taps into a personal and sensitive part of the participants lived experience. Should their participation in the study be upsetting or cause distress, they will be provided with resources for counselling intervention.

Benefits: The experiences of the participants will allow readers of this study insight into the lived-world of drug addicts and recovering drug addicts so as to enhance an understanding of and expand the knowledge base regarding this social dilemma within the South African context. In so doing, it may influence broader rehabilitative initiatives.

If you are willing to be a part of this the study, I would appreciate your written consent.

Thank you for your kind assistance.

Fatima Kurtha
Registered Intern Psychologist
HPCSA Registration #: PSIN 0131121

Supervisor: Mr. Werner Human
Registered Clinical Psychologist
HPCSA Registration #: PS 0097861
E-mail: wernerh@mosaik.com

I, _____, on behalf of _____ (name of institution) give consent to voluntarily participate in the research study titled, *A narrative inquiry into the experiences of recovering drug addicts*, conducted by Fatima Kurtha.

My signature signifies that:

✓ I, _____, on behalf of _____ (name of institution) understand and agree to the terms of the study as described in the attached letter and/or as explained to me by the researcher, Fatima Kurtha.

✓ I, _____, on behalf of _____ (name of institution) agree to maintain the confidentiality of the participants involved in the study at all times.

Name	
Name of Institution	
Signature	
Researcher Name	Fatima Kurtha
Researcher Signature	
Signed/confirmed at _____	On _____
	20__



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Faculty of Humanities

Department of Psychology

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER AND INFORMED CONSENT

Title of the study:

A narrative inquiry into the experiences of recovering drug addicts

Research conducted by:

Name: Fatima Kurtha

Student #: 04310829

Cell: 072 414 7734

Email: tima.kurtha@gmail.com

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in an academic research study that explores the experiences of recovering drug addicts. The study will be conducted by me, Fatima Kurtha, a postgraduate psychology student undertaking research for a Masters Degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of Pretoria. From this study I hope to learn about your experiences, your thoughts and feelings about your journey of recovery from drug addiction.

Purpose:

The purpose of the study is to explore and understand the experiences of drug addiction and recovery from the person behind the drug, that is, the expert themselves, that is, you. In exploring your journey of recovery, the study aims to capture the stories and meanings behind the transition of your life from your early childhood experiences to the start of your drug addiction, and ultimately the experiences of abandoning your addiction. In essence, the study aims to provide a platform for the unheard

voices of recovering drug addicts to be heard and to explore their experience of reconstructing their lives.

Procedure: You will be required to write an autobiographical account that highlights your most significant experiences in your journey through drug addiction and recovery. This may then be followed by an interview with the researcher, should the researcher need to clarify and follow up on the information that you provided in your autobiography. Should the interview be required, it will be audio-recorded in full. The audio- recordings will be transcribed and analysed along with your autobiographies. All identifying information will be disguised and alternate names will be used.

Confidentiality: No identifying information will be revealed in any discussion, description or research publications by the researcher. Names will be changed to protect your identity. I, the researcher, will receive supervision during the course of this study. However, confidentiality will be further maintained within supervisory consultations.

Information: The information gleaned from the study will be used as the basis for a master's dissertation in psychology. The dissertation will be distributed in hardcopy and electronic formats on academic platforms, and will also be archived. Academic papers may utilise the information. The data may also be used for future research. You will have the opportunity to view the findings should you request to.

Risks: The research taps into a personal and sensitive part of your lived experience. Should your participation in the study be upsetting or cause you distress, you will be provided with resources for counselling.

Benefits: This is an opportunity for you to voice your story about your journey to recovery from drug addiction, free from stigmatisation or judgement. Your experiences will allow readers of this study insight into the lived-world of drug addicts and recovering drug addicts so as to enhance an understanding of and expand the knowledge base regarding this social dilemma within the South African context. Furthermore, your story may influence rehabilitative initiatives.

Participant's rights: Your participation in this study is important and valuable to me. participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences. Should you choose to withdraw from the study, all data relevant to you will be destroyed.

You have the right to ask any questions that may arise before, during and after your participation in the study.

You have the right to decide what information and to what extent you wish to share.

You have the right to provide information based on the understanding that it is completely confidential.

You have the right to contact the researcher should you require any further information via the contact information provided on this form.

If you are willing to participate in the study, I would appreciate your written consent.

Thank you for your kind assistance.

Fatima Kurtha
Registered Intern Psychologist
HPCSA Registration #: PSIN 0131121

Supervisor: Mr. Werner Human
Registered Clinical Psychologist
HPCSA Registration #: PS 0097861
E-mail: wernerh@mosaik.com

I, _____ hereby agree to voluntarily participate in the research study titled, *A narrative inquiry into the experiences of recovering drug addicts*, conducted by Fatima Kurtha.

My signature signifies that:

- ✓ My participation is voluntary.
- ✓ I understand and agree to the terms of the study as described in the attached Information Leaflet and/or as explained to me by the researcher, Fatima Kurtha.
- ✓ I am English literate.
- ✓ I give consent for the audio-recording of interviews (in the event that an interview is held) and the publication of research findings.

Participant Name		
Participant Signature		
Researcher Name	Fatima Kurtha	
Researcher Signature		
Signed/confirmed at _____	On _____	20 __

APPENDIX C: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES

Note: Autobiographical accounts have been produced (linguistically and structurally) verbatim so as to preserve the characterisation and authenticity of the participants' linguistic repertoire.

ADAM'S STORY

This is a story about a man who was born on the 26th June 1986 in a loveable warm good home with the most wonderful parents in a closed knit community with fantastic culture and people.

Growing up was awesome up until I become a teenager. I was doing great at school until I met a group of people who I called friends.

Still in high school we decided to do a year end trip to Durban where my destruction began. We met with other people who invited them to visit and they drag me along. Getting there they were smoking weed and peer pressure led me to smoke.

Coming back home one drug led to another and before I knew it I was addicted to cat and cocaine.

I realised it was a problem when I was doing it on my own and no one was there to influence me.

One day I went to a doctor's office and playing with his machine I asked him to test my brain. He then discovered a part of my brain was only functioning at 6%, I denied it as he told me I belong in a mental institution.

Playing in my mind I went to see the best neurologist in Gauteng and he advised I do a CT scan, the results were that my brain looked like a 60 year old and all my cells were damaged and there was nothing he could do for me.

Not liking what he told me I drove to the dealer and bought a big stash. On my way home I stopped on the side of the road because my brain was asking for more and at that point I looked at the sky and asked the All Mighty for help and said. "O creator I am a terrible person I disobey you in every way I ask your forgiveness and I believe in you so please guide and help me. I did not take any at that time and 10mins later I reached home, opened all the drugs and flushed it down the toilet, went to my dad and told him I have a problem and I need help".

He arranged me to go to minds alive in Durban where I did Ibogaine it fixed my brain and all the cells. I could remember my youth and realised I had a lot to fix at home. My parents were very forgiving and proud to see me doing better.

They picked me up at minds alive and we stayed the night in Durban. The following morning a clear sunrise I went to the sea and I was watching how beautiful nature is set I took my sim card and threw it in the ocean saying only true friends will come to visit because they knew where I stay.

Months went by none of them came and I realised who my true friends are my parents and family.

Today I have been clean for more than 10 years now and I have built a little empire for myself and still growing a lovely business and looking after a wonderful family. I have a 2 year son and an awesome wife and mother.

Unfortunately I lost my dad 2 years ago but luckily I don't have much regrets because for 8 years he was my best friend, my dad, my everything and we did everything together.

It is very hard for me to answer all the questions they have asked and for many of those questions I no longer have answers for I have chosen to forget the bad and hold the good close to me because the past is a place of reference and should not be a place of residence.

I might not be able to answer all your questions but I can give you advise on how to get out of your bad habits and stay out of it as a drug counsellor today.

Pick your friends wisely.

- Bad company will cause you to use drugs and will even cause you to relapse.
- Admit a problem do not deny it.
- Ibogaine is herbal and safe when used in a proper centre and does remove cravings and take the mind back to where it was before you started using.
- Work hard and stay focused on your goals.
- Remember a setback is nothing but a set up for a comeback may the all mighty help all people who are involved and bless them to change their lives and stop destroying their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

Remember people with the worst past create the best future.

Thank you.

ESTELLE'S STORY

Some may say "tell us your story about the use of drugs, during, and after " but truth be told, " you'll never fully understand the reasons as to why the fruit got rotten inside when the surface looks so good ", so I'm gonna take you on a trip down memory lane. I'm gonna paint a picture, a picture to best explain the reasoning behind my drug use and my addiction.

You see my truth is I never truly fitted in at home, for many years I believed I was adopted, even at school I never really had good friends, they just used me for what I had at that time, at home I was born a disappointment, my parents wanted a son, so I did my best to be handy in the house with the electrical work, learnt how to help dad out fixing his car, yet it's was never enough,i was the type of girl that use to patch up the roof, paint the house roof all the way to grouting the tiles on the floor. I was in a constant mission for my parents axceptance.

When I was in grade 12 I was told that year end I would be sent to Jhb to work and support my mother and sister in Durban, cause my parents split up, for many years my father committed adultery, and drank, came home and assaulted us, " talk bout disfunctional family ". So I had no choice I did just that I worked at my uncles business and my salary got deposited into mum's accounts for at least 2 years I never saw a cent. Nor did I get a thank you, I was told it's called Paying ur dues.

Eventually I came to durban, started working had a best friend who had a boyfriend so naturally I was their third wheel. You see I never believed in love cause I never saw it at home, so I wasn't the guy chasing chick I was the chick that hung out with guys, So my besty introduced me to her boyfriends brother , my first real encounter with a guy like that, I was shocked I was nervous, I was terrified, but the meet and greet went well, I did just that I met the guy said Hi said bye took my bag and.....

left cause he was by far the worst looking guy iv ever met in my life , he had tatooz his tongue was pierced his ears were pierced his eye bro was pierced, he had scull chains on his hands, chains hanging from his Jeans to his spike wallet, Like Omg, what's up with this guy ran threw my mind, clearly this guy is demon possessed!!! Before u can say bobs your uncle I was gone, I mean talk about "1st impressions " . Eventually we started talking and I got to know the guy behind the mask, he was a sweet caring guy, whom I later fell in love with.

Nine months into dating I started having serious health issues, I mean seriously hectic cramps I needed to be rushed into hospital, I was getting treated for Polycistial Ovarian Disease, I was told that I can't have children, yet my mother thought I was pregnant! So she kicked me out of her house, she said I brought disgrace to her and the family, this mind u was the 23 Dec, the 22 Dec I broke up with the boyfriend cause on the 22nd of Dec when it rains it pours hey, so here I am homeless, no boyfriend, no family, nothing, a friend said I can move into her room at her mom's place cause she was settled down with her hubby in their place, so I was waiting for her to come from Town to fetch me.

Then my phone rings, it's the ex-boyfriends mum, we were really very close she wanted me to be her daughter in law years before I met her son, I loved his mother far

more than I loved him, so she goes on to say, " baby for some reason I think something it's really wrong, I know something is wrong ur my child please talk to me in here for u, You now that." I broke down, this is my ex boyfriend's mother showing me so much of love, love iv never felt before. She insisted I go over to her place, once I was there she never let me leave, u see I was never a fighter of a person I was always shy the silent type the type of person u can push over, the tube litie type yes that's me, and my family took advantage of that kindness and made it my weakness. But my " mother in law showed me how to be kind sweet timid but take shit from no one. " My mother in law made me sleep with her in her bed for 6 months, my father in law slept on the floor, cause I refused to sleep in the same room as my ex, but at this time we were working things out, u see I couldn't hav children ,so my question to him was why waste your time on me when you can get someone who can give u children .

My wedding was set for the 19 of July, and on the 02 of July , the light of my life, my best friend, my mother, the one person who showed me what it felt to give love and receive love my mother in law has an heart attack and passed on, I still ended up getting married and the day she died our happy fantasy world came to a stand still.

41 days later my husband gets so drunk, u see he was a mommy's boy, he honestly couldn't face life without his mother, drugs was no stranger to this family, my brother in law sold it cause he was a user supporting his habits, my sister in law soon followed her hubby this is whilst the aunty was alive but who would of told her, her sons were her life, she lived for her family and families around her, no1 was evil enough to tell her the truth and brake her heart. So on day 41 my husband bought and started using drugs , in the midst of the 40 days we had to be married cause we were already living together and the wedding was already planed for the 19th. We never had a proper wedding, every girl has a dream wedding, I did also have myself a dream wedding but mine was a nightmare come true.

So here I am in a house as a new bride with a husband with a drug problem, we both had really good jobs, we were living the life, and he could support his habits without it causing a threat, i use to but groceries for the naborz, and snacks for their children, cause I couldn't have my own so I use to spoil everyone else's, I did have a lot of pets though, I had hamsters, fish, birds(the hatchlings that falls from the tree I nurse then

and release them) , cats the strays that I fed had kittens in our yard so I took care of them , and a Dog, and I loved them all so dearly, my husbands drugging became a problem mentally he started to slowly loose his mind, he started become posesive over me, he will chase the children to their homes, he put my cats and kittens in a box and left them somewhere, he broke my bird cage, he put sunlight liquid in my fish tank and my fish died, he killed all my hamsters with Q20, when I asked him why he said cause I pay more attention to my hamsters then him, he gave took Kia for a walk and tied her somewhere, but she found her way home. All this happened over.

Then he dint wanna go to work, so he started staying away a lot, I use to find his rock pipes laying around, he was the type of druggy that loved to collect his used wrappings and pipes and look at them from time to time, I then had a talk to him about finding help, so I did a lot of reaserch and found that ARCA was the best to detox, at this time I really and truly wanted a child, yes I was told I can't fall pregnant, yes I was told it's impossible for me to be a mother cause I have such a complicated problem with my whomb but I had that hair strand faith, I had that type off attitude that I can do anything I put my mind to, iv been proving people wrong most of my life. I'm a girl been told I could do things a guy can yet iv done it. So me having my very own child was just a matter of time I kept on saying to myself, and to be very honest that's the only thing that kept me going strong, " Just a matter of time ". Now I wanted a child but I dnt want the baby to be deformed cause my hubby is drugging, so thus ARCA came into the picture, now this rehab sticks needles into you and flush u out. The doctor does a drug test for u wen u enter and when u leave, it's always positive on entry, Negative on Departure, it was R 25000 a time, my hubby went there 3 times, you see when it comes to drugs u can take the horse to the water but u can't make it drink, I took him to rehab I got him clean, I took so many loans from all the banks, I workrd overtime just to get him into rehab, his job was to just stay clean, but he just wasn't ready, he only got clean do that we can try to get pregnant that's all, on the 3rd time we went to his Rehab the doctor said I have a 99% no return rate ur husband is that 1 % that keeps comming back if he relapses don't bring him back. I was devastated, I was destroyed in the inside, yet I put on a strong face for lmtiaz, loved him cared for him and I had that hair strand faith that God will bless us and heal him.

Remember God's time isint our time, eventually on the last detox I got pregnant, the day I got my results was the happiest day of my life , little did I realise it ws the begging of the end, Imtiaz relapsed that day, he lost his job, I had to find another option to help Imtiaz the father of my child, the man I loved, the man id do anything for, my reaserch led me to Methadone so I had to buy Methadone for him, he would take it in the morning when I'm going to work just to make me happy, only for me to come home early from work to find my house is his business office, he was selling his Methadone to the other heroine (sugar) smokers, I'd see him filling water into the mixture and selling it to the guys, just for him to make extra money for him so he could smoke, " U can take a horse to the water but u can't make it drink "

Five months into my pregnancy he punched my face and cut my lip open only because he wanted R50 to buy Rock ,i have a scar on my face for life for R50, I still loved him I still stuck by his side y u might ask us because I dnt wanna be my mother, I Dnt want to abandon my husband, I Dnt believe in divorce, I believed if something is broken we should fix it not throw it away, it's stupid it's idiotic it's not of the 21st century, but hey call me old schooled but that was me.

He started stealing things from home and selling, I'd go to work come home, my house hasnt got curtains, he sold the fridge stove microwave, he smoked our water and lights money, we had no water no lights I was pregnant, no food, I use to hav a cold bath with the water that came out in drops, I use to let the tap drip the hole day so I'd have water for the nyt and morning bath, I once had a gas stove he sold it.

The 31st June 2012, My Gift from God was delivered, I named her Atiya after my mother in law, I was the happiest mother in the hospital, I was the perfect example of " laughing eyes Crying Heart" my heart was burdend we dnt hav good at home no lights no water what em I to do, yet so excited I have a baby a child of my own, a mini me. I never complaint to my family about Imtiaz, that's my husband we had the problem it was our secret which we hid from the world, My mother God bless her soul, said we should come live with her, that day really did turn out the best day of my. Life, we take do much for granted, do u know how happy I was just to have a hot bath that nyt, I was so greatful, I even cried with joy in the bathroom wen the warm water fell on my body.

We lived with my mom until I was fit and ready to go to work, Imtiaz was still smoking, he was stealing things and selling, I fixed him a job as a driver, from wear house manager to driver, how drugs can bring a man to his knees, " so we got our very own place, I wanted my husband to be comfortable so I got a place which we were now renting in, it was hard but I coped, his money I never saw, my money I ran the house, transport for me to go to work and back and I use to pay my aunty to keep Atiya, I budgeted his spending money for his smoking, so he wnt be forced to steal from home. " which wife in her right mind will do this " its clear iv visited a place called point of no return, and lost myself there. "Lol"now I can look back and laugh but at that time I believed I was doing the right thing.

I come home one day after work baby is 1 year 5 months, and find her milk her clothes everything she owns is gone, Imtiaz has happened!!!!!! All I did was open up the gate and door, and said, " walk away never come back " he told me it's late he would go in the morning, he slept on the sleeper coatch that nyt , and left 1st thing the next morning, I cried my eyes out, I was finished, I wanted to end my life at this point, cause 5 years of marriage down the drain, I felt as a failure as a wife, a failure as a mother, now I brought this child into this world to grow up in a broken home just like me. I was devistated. I phoned my mother to fetch me, I told her and my family my story, ever since then iv been living with my mother, I was 27 at that time I had Atiya wen I was 26.

It was a difficult step to make leaving my home my marriage and the man I loved so dearly, for me personally it was difficult, sometimes even at present moment it's difficult, it's been three in half years I still sleep with a man size teddy bear next to me. It's hard to come to bed at night and not have your man besides you.i still cry but this time iv mastered the art of crying like a winner, meaning" I cry on the inside".

I braved up for my child, I hid my hurt my pain my suffering from everyone but I was breaking bit by bit everyday no1 could see it know one knew that I was a broken person, Two weeks before my 28th birthday, my crown birthday I. Took a 5 mints walk to next road were they sell drugs " the Gulli" I bought 2 straws, I came home I opened all my clothes I sat on the bathroom floor and I got my self ready, I was determined to

smoke this drug, I wanted to know what was so good about this drug that it stripped me off everything, I hated my ex for destroying my dream of having a happy family. I took my 1st pull I missed it, I pulled the second hit then the 3rd, I got really sick I started spewing and my tummy was turning. I thought I was gonna die, my tummy felt like it was tearing open. I threw away the sugars, I threw away the bat and foil I phoned work and said I'm not well, I slept the entire day and night. Atiya use to like with my aunty and uncle, husband and wife, mother & father role models, I was guilty cause I felt I robbed her of a family. So she lived with them Monday to Friday. Weekends she came home.

I didn't get my answer so I went back to the gully to get again, and again and again, on my 3rd day the dealer said tomorrow you're gonna get up feeling sick, don't go to the doctors come to me, when I 1st went to the dealer he gave me a hassle, he refused to serve me cause he knew me, I schooled with his sister and the girls in his family, I told him if he doesn't serve me I'll just get it from somewhere else, so he started to serve me so he can keep an eye on me, he use to speak to me every day I went there, I kept on saying when I get my answers I'll stop, on I'll explain, so day 4 I got up feeling sick so I dragged myself out of bed had a bath got dressed went to my dealer he sat me down and explained that what's happening to me is called a roster, this means the drugs is now in my body in my blood and leaving my body so my body is now depending on a recharge.

So my body started craving this drug, I became weak, I felt like I had the common cold but 10 times worse, so I bought the straw took it home striped and smoked it. I got instant relief. I got a shiver down my spine. And I was back to normal, but this time something in me was different, I didn't feel anything, like hurt and pain, no anger no regret. The more I smoked each day the less I cared about pleasing people, I stopped becoming the foot stool to everyone.

I even got a promotion at work, cause I stopped feeling sorry for everyone's sad stories, and. Started following prodacal, I started smoking in Feb till April, I booked in May I booked in to rehab phoenix ladies recovery center, I booked Inn cause I was sick and tired off getting up and looking at my dealers face in the morning. I got tired of waking up thinking about smoking, smoking before I sleep.

So I eventually I had enough, so I told my higher Management I had a drug problem and needed leave to book into rehab, they never believed me, eventually I told them do a drug test for me if it's positive then they must grant my leave if it's negative then I'll stay at work, needless to say I had my leave granted cause I failed my drug test.

Got into rehab I had to get a note from the doc to prove I'm an addict, had to get a note to say I'm not on any medication, and get a script for Methadone, " hydronic isint life just hilarious " I use to buy all this for my husband and now the tables are turned, so I got the stuff ready and I booked in, on arrival I was searched like a common smoker, it hurt but I understand that they had to check all who booked Inn for possession on drugs, my detox wasn't that bad cause I don't do as much as every one else ,i just had irritation and I had shivers hot nd cold flushes , whilst in rehab we were attending AA meetings, iv been to 5 and one night it was a guy named Jack that was sharing his story. A guy spk to me after the meeting, I thought at 1st his a social worker, cause of the manner he spoke, he took my number to call about literature for the rehab, cause I was really keen on learning this way of life threw sobriety.

The very next day the guy calls me, about the literature, and we started to speak over bbm and whatsapp, he started to teach me bout the AA way, I was 28 and he was 32, if u spend enough time with someone ul start to grow found off that person, so naturally I fell for this guy, he was humble, sweet, well mannered well spoken intelligent, I use to even go over to his place, and we should go yo meetings together. My mother kicked me out off the house when she found out I was in rehab. I booked myself in and told her I was giving a lecture in Jhb, my ex hubby spyed me out, I found a place not to far from the rehab, cause I wanted to help the other girls that was there I wanted to give back, there was another girl there, very badly addicted to heroine, I helped clean her out and moved her in with me so I can help her and care for her, in the end she relapsed and gave me a terrible hidding in the process, so I moved out and left her to fend for herself. I went to live with my daughter and my aunty and uncle, I was dating at this time, I moved out to live in Durban North near my work, I was clean for 8 months, my aunty tried stealing my child from me, she went to the hospital and said I abandoned my child and they don't knw were I was, yet the weekend b4 they can do this I spend the entire weekend with baby at they place, and they came and dropped

me off at my house. My boyfriend said I shouldn't fight it I just let it go, I refused, I was not just gonna let it go this is my child we were talking about, so he and I had a fight, our relationship beautiful as it was ended that day, I was heart broken cause the women whom I trusted with my gift from God could do that to me, then the second man I loved hurt me by not standing by my side, I took my baby away from there, my aunty denied everything but I saw the hospital chat my self, her daughter In law wanted my child. I brought baby home to my mother's house, I started living with my mother again. The very next day I relapsed.

The hurt the pain was to much for me to bear, I needed to be numbed all over again, I needed to feel nothing cause I was feeling used betrayed, unloved alone, like a dog to come back to my mother's house and hear words everyday about what a failure and a disgrace I was. So naturally I found myself drugging again, this time how ever it was. Full year relapse, I started exactly were I picked up. This time I use to smoke in the gullies with the guys and girls, I,started work in ADT cause I left work in cci the hours were to late cause baby was living with us, cci was night shift, ADT was day shift, I met an old work friend in the gullies I was shocked to see her smoke, we became smoking buddies ,this time I started smoking in another area, near the shopping center. I use to take a taxi there, iv smoked amount, prosies, rogues, and full blown addicts, they all respected me. Cause I wasn't like the other smokers even though I was one of them I took pride in my dressing, I was the only smoker there who had mannies and peddies ,i use to still go to the salon, I love to pamper myself, I had to work extra hard, cause I was guilty of smoking I use to over compensate wen it came to baby, I couldn't give her a family but I could buy her things, just that smile and thank u was enough. I knew my job was done, I use to go out smoking with this girl everyday cause we even worked together we even found a gully near our work place, she asked and found out, it was a zulu location, u see this girl smokes very heavy. In this gully we use to buy on account. She would buy and smoke and smoke and smoke, I never enjoyed getting goofed with it I just did it to cure my roster, this girl use to run up the bill I ended up paying it month end.

Eventually I got tired of this life so I put my name down for rehabilitation at minds alive, this place is R 15000 a time, I was smoking this time everyone knw, my friends my mother my body cause I was gone so thin. U don't feel hungry with this drug, no 1

helped me, no1 have me the money to get clean, my final test of searching if I was truly loved, Answer = No I was not!!!!!! . No1 cared not even a fraction of the love which I gave to my husband was given to me, no1 offered, and bought me methadone, or gave me money towards the rehab, twice I booked my self in twice I had to help myself, I spk to owner / doctor, Doc,, he insisted his programme is the best and it will help, I insisted it won't cause I dnt have faith in it to be honest, I lost faith in man, and the ability to trust in people. So Doc said he will do my rehabilitation program on the house, so he added me to his register, he bought me Morphine and said I should stop using methadone I should rather smoke instead of take methadone.

So I started smoking near my house again, this was April month end 2015 I went to buy make up from a " friend that stays near the gully " I bought the lipstick tried it on, I even bought shampoo and conditioner, I told her I'd cum later for it cause my bag was to small. I bunked work and spent the entire day in the gulli, smoking rock and sugar, I bought buttons for the dealer. Later that afternoon Helen the girl I bought the lipstick from comes to the gully and asked me if I saw the ring, I said no! I haven't seen any ring, from asking me if I saw it it became I took it, I started crying I said I never took it I never took it, I told her y r u doing this to me u knw I never take it! It's not in my nature, the dealer said he is my proof, cause I went to the bank twice that day and my bank transactions tallies with his black stock book, he said I should keep my bank card on me and keep my atm slips safe, Helen said the ring is worth R3500 but I must pay R1500 and we will call it even, I refused to pay, cause I never took it, so we went to the car park of the station, I went to give my statement i dnt realise they had other intentions, I never got a chance to give statement ,they called a police, upon arrival I greeted her but instead I got slapped, this is outside the station not even in the same yard this is across the road...

The so called police officer never ask me anything in her eyes I was guilty cause I was a sugar smoker, she dnt even ask me for a statement she grabbed me by my hair and took me to straight to the holding cells and she hit me and hit me and hit me she kept on asking me were is the ring? I replied, " I don't know I never saw a ring officer I'm innocent ". She was Helen contact, the police lady punched me on my face she said she will disfigure my face and make me look like the rest of the smoker girls, she threw me from wall to wall I remember trying to look at her badge but I couldn't see cause

my eyes were swollen and blurry she said, "I'm Captain, go ahead charge me I know were you work I know were you stay. " I spent that night in the jail getting abused hole night threw and then taking to court the next day, she told the prosecutors to give me a prosecutor welcome even they said I went steal a ring cause they know me I always had money cause I work and I get paid well, that night the only reason she stopped was the two night shift police officers said it's enough, and she needed to leave me alone, they were two black officers and Captain was an Indian.

Next morning they released all the prosecutors cause they were making noise, they held me back, then at 10:30 the police officer came and called me he said I was free to go! I said I haven't seen the judge, he said you was never charged doll, what happened to you was wrong, he said go back to the station and charge her, so I did just that, I charged her for assault, unlawful arrest, I have a lawyer now that's fighting my case for assault, unlawful arrest and deformation of character. It was a Wednesday night, I came out Thursday Morning.

I went to work to resign on Friday, I was booked in to rehab on Tuesday, I stayed there for 4 days and never touched sugars ever again, the part of me that believed in love died, human kindness died, I still help the poor I still speak to my smoker friends, council them every chance I get, Personally I feel nothing for no1, other than the suffering addicts and my child.

The shy humble ignorant girl that spent her life searching for love has died, my sobriety gave birth to a woman that feels nothing, I have no real friends, I have no family other than my daughter, my family classed me judged me like they were God's, my sister did no such thing she stood by my side, so in my life today is drug free, free of hurt and pain, I'm happy to give myself a new start, thank you to Ibogaine rehab I have my life back it released me if my hurt my pain my suffering, iv change I'm clean but the world is exactly the same.

I'm working again earning well once again but now I'm much more wiser I trust very little people, I believe very few people that good intentions. I keep to myself, cause when I needed love support and attention I got none, so now that I'm clean I don't need anything from anyone, I'm still single today and I'm loving Living Life.

Hi I'm Estelle and I'm an addict and this was a trip down memory lane, my road wasn't a smooth one but it's one I'm grateful for, cause I am the strong women I am today because of what happened to me yesterday so I know I can handle what tomorrow holds for me.

I hope my story shed some light into what goes on when you drug, it all leads to the same things, Drugs, instertution, incaseration, death. All of which has happened to me.

May u be inspired by my story to go out and make a difference, try to touch someone's heart, help someone share hope to the hopeless. God Bless You all and never forget to be grateful for the little url have cause someone somewhere is praying for what u have. Iv turned 30 this year and I'm fulfilling my hearts desires one at a time and making my dreams a reality, I am in the doing stages of opening my own business I wanted to open a call center ever since I walked threw the doors of my 1st one, now I'm at an advantage cause I have a chance to help the suffering I can do something about their situation, I want to give hope to the hopeless I want to be that friend that sister that family member to support them in they time of struggle, I want to be everything I wished for myself at that time, I never got it but I can give it. I love you'll all with the never failing love that only and addict can give, special thanks to u for taking your time your busy day to ready my story I really hope it helps u in your personal life in some way....

Ez

MIRIAM'S STORY

Crawling in a crack pipe, tripping over lines of snow, my story begins like this.....

I was merely just a kid when my parents got divorced. Growing up was real crappy for me. I guess looking back at it now I would say I was a rather messed up kid.

Yes many things are a complete blur for me, like fun times spent in the sun with my father, dad teaching me to ride a bike or throw a ball. I do remember my mom and dad

screaming at one another. I remember a lot of hostile and drama growing up. Before my parents got divorced, there is one incident that I will never forget. My father standing drunk as hell in front of us with a revolver in his hand. Holding the gun to his head and pulling the trigger. But no bang! The only gunshot I remember of that is the gunshot before that which brought us all into one section of the house.

I'm going to skip a few chapters and get on to the real stuff.

So with my parents' divorce it was the normal visitation rights to my dad. Every second weekend dad would fetch me, when he wasn't too drunk to do so!

Growing up I watched my cousins enjoy a fully functional family. Did I feel sad or upset? Was I a little bit jealous and full of envy? Did I develop a serious anger within me towards my parents? YES!!! I hated that my family was not normal, full of animosity and so much drama! Growing up being told hateful things about my father. Not being able to ever bond with my mother as she was too caught up in her own life and pain. I was alone, in a big world all on my own.

I was real messed up as a little girl, I mean as messed up as they get. I was 9 years old, it was New Year's Eve, and I sat in the bathroom with a scissor and just started scratching my legs till it bled a little. Only just a little. Did I know what I was doing? Yea I knew exactly what I was doing, I merely wanted a little bit of attention. As time went by, every time I was upset I would do it again, tiny little scratches. I did this until it stopped becoming an attention seeking thing, it started to give me relief, it made me feel better, I started finding my peace in it. Where did I learn this? How can a little kid know this? TV!!!! I remember seeing it on TV once. And that's how I got into it. Over more years the scratching turned into cutting, the cutting into slicing and the slicing into hacking. As I sit and write this right now I cannot count the amount of scars I still have all over my body.

Growing up was miserable, I had no friends and really battled to fit in anywhere. I found my solace in watching TV. I enjoyed watching lives of gangsters and that's what I wanted to become. Yeah... what a great goal to set for myself.... I was a very angry child who always covered it up with a smile. This anger I had in me turned into a deep rage. I held it in, or expressed it in blood and deep cuts on my body. Does anger really just develop into a rage like this? That I don't know, but I do know what triggered this

rage in me. I was molested at a young age, only around 12 or 13, it happened on a few occasions but I couldn't tell a soul. Not only did I not have that kind of relationship with my mother or sister, but this man was someone very close to me. Infact when daddy was too drunk to fetch me he would come. Well now I know why. My very own uncle molested me! Who could I have told? No one would believe me, how can I break up a happy family, my cousins cant grow up without their daddy like I did.... Yea these were my thoughts. i truly believed that my silence would protect them and not hurt anyone. Little did I know that my silence was destroying me. It did eventually get out. The truth always comes out after all, but that I will discuss shortly.

A couple years went by and I started becoming rebellious. Getting up to mischief. But when I was in high school I started becoming totally uncontrollable. I would bunk classes, bunk school, disrupt classes. Smoking on the school premises. Selling smokes... eventually I was smoking weed at school, then selling weed, bullying the girls and some of the boys. When it was the second term of grade 10 I just stopped going to school. During these years I would run away from home, get myself into trouble with loan sharks and other gangsters. Oh did I mention at this time I was one of the guys. We did messed up things. Broke into cars, stole things, mugged people, beat up people and all the things you can think of that happens on the streets of joburg. I truly put my mother through a lot of hell. When I just didn't go home for a few days. I was always getting into big trouble and running from one place to the next. I was so caught up in being high all the time that I didn't realize at that time that I could end up dead, but then again, I didn't really care. I didn't ever want to nit be high on drugs. My first line of cocaine sent me to a world of peace. Obviously that was a delusion. I couldn't get off it. I loved it. Cocaine was my first love. That's what I called her. I was well out of hand at this point. I guess my mother couldn't understand why this is happening to her little girl. One day I was really very high and it just came out, the truth, the truth about my uncle came tumbling out my mouth. My mother was furious. She immediately took me to lay a charge. At least she believed me, I was relieved. Then when things with the case went further and it came to the family, they literally turned on me. Every last one of them. They said things like I am on drugs and im lying. They said things like I want to break up their families because of my broken home. They even went as far as twisting my words to make it seem as though I am intentionally trying to ruin them for kicks. I never saw that family again. The case was

thrown out of court because besides the state feeling “no penetration no crime”, all evidence or whatever counted against me as well. I apparently fabricated this entire thing. I WAS A DAMN CHILD FOR GODS SAKE!!!! What motive could I possibly have had? I kept it quiet, allowed it to eat me from inside, allowed it to destroy me, yet I was wrong? I was called a liar? I couldn't understand this. I only tried to protect them. Anyway moving on...

Eventually I ended up with some really hardcore people. The don of bez valley, I can still smell his cologne through the sweat on his body. I can still smell the beer on his breath and his strong arms that gripped my arms. I was raped sometime after being molested. I lost my virginity to some disgusting thug! Ok he was hot, really good looking but he was a thug. He drugged me and I woke up in sheets with him passed out on top of me. I do not remember what happened the night before, but I do remember that when I pushed him off me he woke up and offered me more drugs. That night he put me in a club and made me dance to make him money. Every time I had to run away from home to go work for this man. He threatened me, beat me, I was really scared of him. Finally I managed to break free from his claws. And well I never stopped the drugs, it got worse. Besides the partying and the good times that there were, it's the terrible moments that are imprinted in my head. It's those moments that haunt me until today.

The devils dick! That's what its called, or satans cock also another name for it... crack! From cocaine, my first love, to this! Yea there I was in the heart of Hillbrow crawling in a crack pipe! My accomplice and I were living inside a steel factory where we would hide during the day and at night steal the steel and get cracked up. Eventually he disappeared and I was once again on my own. With cops looking for me, my mom looking for me, I hid in corners and crawled in pipes. Till I found shelter at another thugs house in Kensington. My mother hired a PI to find me. It saddens me to think back to what I put her through. She told me so many times that everytime her phone would ring, she would think they found my body and they calling her to identify it. How can a child put a mother through that? Anyway when the PI found me they sent me to a halfway house or whatever until they could find a decent rehab for me. A few days later they picked me up and took me to Noupoot. The worst place on earth. I spent a year and a half in that place. Yea it was worse than any boot camp or prison. In this

place I lost even the slightest bit of my faith. I denounced my faith and took on another. I was so brainwashed to believe what they wanted me to believe. I was tortured in that place for that year and a half. One good thing came out of it though, I got my matric.

After noupoort, I was barely out long when I was already back on crack. They sent me to another place on an outpatient program. But that didn't last long as I was non-compliant. It was further downhill from there. Old patterns crept up again, I just wouldn't go home when I didn't feel like it. Drugging and partying all the time.

I had a job, I was working at a towing company just before I turned 18. When I finally became of legal age, I moved out of my mothers house. I was living the life. Massive parties and crazy hangovers at work. I had a little flat in Bramley. I met a man, my worst nightmare so to speak. But I loved him. He was a student and I was working and we decided to live together. He was a very controlling and demanding man. While I had a drug problem he had an alcohol problem. I remember one night he was so drunk and he beat me up for the first time. I laid there in shock, I didn't understand what just happened. This was shortly after I had a freak accident that should have killed me but didn't. I wasn't even fully recovered at that moment. I couldn't go to work the next day because I was bruised and still healing. Time went by with this man, I never gave up, everytime he got drunk I knew he was gonna beat me so I just waited for it. I would let him do his thing and when he was satisfied I would just lay there until I fell asleep. I remember a day he came back so drunk, I just knew what was coming, I ran out the back door to go to someone elses flat in the complex. He found me there, he dragged me out by my hair, ripped my clothes off in front of a group of strange men, kicked the shit out of me and tried to rip out my belly ring. I managed to get out of that and ran to the top floor and made that phone call. My family came to take me away, but not long after I decided to go back. My sister wept as she washed my bruised body that night, yet I still went back. One day I got tired of it really tired and I finally broke through, I retaliated so bad that I left him with a bleeding head after breaking a few beer bottles on him. I thought to myself, he is way too strong for me physically so I need to find another way to break him. It was at this point that the reality set in. This is no longer a relationship, **this is war!** I came back one day with cocaine. He didn't know all along that I was on drugs. I sat on the bed pulled the coffee table closer and threw the bag

out. I made a couple lines as he watched me, I took one and handed him the note and said try it. So he did. He tried it and he liked it. And it went on and on.

From crawling in crack pipes, tripping over lines of snow into the creases of my foil, chasing away I go.

We moved out of Bramley and into a nice little flat in Randburg. The war must go on. I gave this monster a new treat. Crystal meth! We chased it off foil. At this point I had a great job working for bmw. I would make sure he had a fix at home while I went to work. I would come back with a fix and so it went on. The abuse continued, but that was all good with me. I allowed it and allowed it, knowing that as much as he thinks he is winning, I am infact killing him silently. I would make him do so much drugs at a time that he would lose his head. Many times he lost it, paranoid as hell, scared and vulnerable. It was these moments when I would attack his mind. I almost succeeded in making him kill himself. However .. this war became too monotonous and boring, I had to walk away. And I did after spending 3 years with this man I just walked away. This was after having gone to yet another rehab. Its so messed up. After everything I put my family through, they were always there to pick up the pieces. And when I say family I mean my mother and sister. After sometime I guess my brother just gave up on me as he wrote me off and cut me out of his life, as for my father... he was just never there.

Off to the Northern Cape I go. After all that drama I decided to settle in Kimberley. Things were no different though. I was still on meth. Smoking tik out of a lolly. Ended up on the streets again riding and hustling. I then left Kimberley and was on the streets of Bloemfontein. Here I did a lot of shit. I broke into houses I conned people. I hustled on another level. I was moving around a lot... bloem Kimberley Joburg. There I was laying in a puddle of my own blood at about 2am, I had hidden in a garage car wash and cut myself all over my body, how much blood can I bleed? How long will I bleed until my body cant survive it anymore? Can I cut a little deeper everytime? I woke up in some strangers house after not knowing how I got there. When I opened my eyes, instead of thanking them I was so angry and swore them for helping me. In Bloem I thought I was at my worst, but I wasn't, it gets worse than this. I was arrested in Johannesburg for Car theft and Theft. I got off with a three year suspended sentence.

My parents didn't come to my rescue at this point. Infact they said I should rot in jail. I returned to Bloem and just carried on with my insane life on the streets. During this time in Bloem I was seeing a guy, he came from a rich very decent family but he was also on drugs and also abusive. His parents tried everything in their power to keep us apart, but his love for drugs was too strong. I actually think he loved drugs more than he ever loved me. His parents had me arrested and I fled from the police from a hospital. I faked ill until I could slip away. Eventually it got to a point where his father actually paid me to leave the Free State. I left... I went to PE. Knew no one, I was all alone but nothing I wasn't use to. I spent a few weeks there living it up. In and out of casinos. Travelling between Uitenhage and PE. Eventually I returned to Bloem as the guy wanted me to come back. So I did. My grandmother who was very ill had passed away. I remember being in the back of someone's house where I took shelter for the night, he came to me early that morning and said... there is a lot of cars outside your granny's house, he said that he isn't sure but he thinks my granny had died. I looked at him with no expression at all and said... please get me a fix. He smoked me up and I broke the lolly after smoking and began cutting my feet till it was covered in blood. I didn't cry, I didn't talk, I was silent. I didn't even go to the funeral. Which was a good thing as I found out later on that they were not going to allow me in. If only she could see me today. If only she was around to see the strong woman I have become. I left Kimberley and went back to Bloem, this time I went back with a death wish of note. I was doing real crazy things, carrying drugs and money to and from Kimberley for the dealer. Until I actually lived with him for a while and was really in bad situations. I cannot count the amount of times I cheated death. The amount of times I stared death in the eyes and then just turned my back and walked away. Why did death always let me get away? Why did death never take me? I was moving so much around that I even lost track of myself. I would have so much drugs that it would literally be falling out of my hair. Other times I would find myself walking on the highway to where ever at early hour of the morning. I had a death wish but death didn't want me. I was still with the Bloem guy, but always missioned off. Time went by and his parents decided, the only way to win is to send us both to rehab. We went to Durban where we underwent a detox called Ibogaine. It was amazing. Although I didn't have the full experience because they didn't want me to be awake, they did it under sleep therapy as my experiences were too traumatic. None the less the experience I did have was out of this world. I felt like a new person. Later on I found out I was pregnant,

unfortunately I assume my body couldn't manage, I lost my little baby. I was clean for a year and a half while also undergoing other therapy. Things were going well with me. I had just got my life back in order, working with a rehab to give back to the community... really just doing very well.

I had two beautiful kittens at this time which I loved dearly. Not long after one of them had died. Now I have much difficulty dealing with loss. My love for animals is out of this world. They were like my children. When Leo died the reality of my gran mothers death only then kicked in. this was over a year after her death. When this reality hit I broke down. I literally went absolutely crazy that they needed to inject me with valium to calm me down. That was big mistake. I assume the valium might have triggered something off and that could have been the cause of my relapse. I moved out again but this time I got married to the guy I was drugging with. Things were crazy from the beginning. We lived in a broken very messy house drugged every single day. We hustled together to maintain our habit. Now I wasn't just on tik. I was smoking mandrax too. He also turned out to be abusive. So that's three abusive relationships this far. my husband would send me out to hustle on my own sometimes, other times he would send me with one of the guys. I was always the one with the plan. I had to be, all my life I had to fend for myself so it was nothing new to me. We weren't married long. It lasted about three months. I ended up throwing him out the house and lived there with the owner of the house who I always had to mission with. My husband practically gave me to him. This was when my lifestyle finally got the better of me. This man was the ultimate killer. We ended up selling everything. We sold that house piece by piece. He too was very abusive, he was worse than anyone I have ever met. When he attacked me, I was scared, he tried to kill me on so many occasions. One day I went out to get groceries, someone very close to me decided to help me out. When I got home he didn't like it very much. He chased me across the veld trying to kill me. He picked up a steel pole and tried to hit me with it. This man was mad. There was another time when he was about to drop a book case on my head while I was asleep because I was talking in my sleep and he didn't like what I was saying. I used to run away from there as well, but kept coming back because my cats were there. Yess I took the one with me and got another two and the one gave birth so I had 8 cats. I loved them more than life itself. They were the only reason I kept going back there. I had no where else for them to live. I found myself in countless situations that would tare any woman apart.

In this one year I experienced not one but two rapes. The one, I wasn't awake, I didn't feel a thing, but woke up undressed. The other one, I was asleep and woke up with him ontop of me... just like the very first time when I woke up under that don. I was held inside this house for about 3 days... and I was raped for three days. Up until today, no one knows this. I mean some do know that I been raped, but they have no idea of the details, what I went through. Most of the scars on my body reminds me of my rape experiences. Everytime I was raped I would go crazy with a blade. My whole idea was, no one can hurt me like I can hurt me. They leave bruises, they leave pain, they leave marks and smells and sounds in my head, but that all goes away. The pain that I put myself through, leaves actual scars which are now there forever. Now here is where things get really messed up. I went back to that house, to find him there smoking with his friend. I told him I really just needed to sleep. I went to sleep and when I opened my eyes he was over me with a knife in his hand. I was talking again. I jumped up and I ran, he blocked me, he took a spade, swung it and missed, he then through it at me and came for me with the knife. He was determined to kill me. I managed to get out the back door and scream for the neighbors to help. That's when he tripped me and kicked me and broke my arm. The neighbors distracted him and I ran around back to get away. Holding my broken arm I went to the other neighbor hid away there and phoned someone to take me to the hospital. The state laid a charge against him. I was in hospital for 3 weeks before they could operate. Who came to my aid? Who was there every visiting hour to bath me and give me the food that I once loved. To brush my hair... to check up on me? MY MOTHER! My mother who I threatened when I was high, who I swore at, put her through so much stress and pain and worry. Everytime I fell she was there to pick me up. I know my mother will travel to the end of the earth if I was in trouble on the other side.

After hospital I wasted no time, reality kicked in, I can no longer do this. I went to rehab again. Infact, a spiritual upliftment programme. Spent three months there, and today, today I am a different person. I am now running a business and clean for the past year and a half.

I really want to just hold my mother right now, and tell her how deeply sorry I am.

Crawling in a crack pipe, tripping over lines of snow, I rushed as I chased crystals a blue flame below. Round and round I go in a globe roll and burn roll and burn, then down seeking equilibrium, to green and cream I turn.....

I am thankful for what I went through, because today I can say, I am strong. I am alive.
I am great!

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

Interview transcript: Adam

Transcript keys:

- *Interviewer: F (Fatima)*
- *Interviewee: A (Adam)*

Note: Interviews have been transcribed verbatim so as to preserve the characterisation and authenticity of the participants' linguistic repertoire, and to depict the nature of the interviews.

[Start of recording]

F: Thank you for meeting with me today and sharing your story with me. Just to let you know that I will be using a voice recorder as well as my cell phone to record our chat today so that we have a backup in case the voice quality on one may not be that good. Your story really left me intrigued by where you were and where you are now. What I'd like us to explore some of the experiences you highlighted in your story, and how these have impacted your life and what they mean to you.

A: Thank you. It's cool.

F: I noticed through our interactions and through your story that family is important for you. It sounds like you come from what sounds like a very supportive home. In your story, you speak of a loving home and community that you come from. Maybe we can begin there and you could tell me a little more about that and what that's been like for you.

A: It's nice because I feel supported. The thing is, if you talk to me and when I council, we don't really believe there's such a thing as friends, because, there isn't really such a thing. There's maybe good people you know, and bad people you know, but if you look at actual friends that's your family because they stick through [with] you through thick and thin. I'm sure that works with everyone. They got what's in the best interest for you, whereas other people are just

looking at what's best for that moment. So, ja, growing up in a supportive home makes a very, very big difference. And the community's quite nice. It's a very muslim community. So you hear the azhaan and things like that. The sad thing is, other people grow up in good homes and they, they meet the bad company and that's when they pretty much get diverted in life. I don't know if you know what I'm trying to say.

F: I do.

A: Pretty much, company plays a very important role. So if you hang around with your family, you more with, with the good people who do good things than you pick up good habits. Whereas if you're with bad people and bad things you're gonna pick up bad habits. That's the sad thing unfortunately.

F: I think what you're saying reminds me about what many people say about addiction, that often it is people from good homes that get caught up in addiction.

A: Ja. But you, there's always hope. I always tell people the worst pasts create the best futures. I donno if you heard about the guy who went to space and dives with sharks who was an addict? We actually doing a drug awareness week with him coming up soon. He's going to be talking to schools and stuff. So, it doesn't mean that you were down you gotta stay down. You just gotta focus and you gotta keep going. Uhm, but friends do play a major role in...in...in screwing people over [laughter]. Uhm, I'm busy with a kid now and his sister came to me. I know her quite well. He's divorced. He's got a one year old kid. And pretty much to do with one friend that he didn't wanna leave out. Its' pretty much where it all comes down to. I donno if you notice with me even, like now even, my family are my friends. When we go somewhere, we go together or whatever the case might be.

F: I see that yes. But that wasn't always the case, was it?

A: No.

F: Okay, can you tell me a bit about how your family became your friends?

A: Obviously you go, you go to school and then certain things feel cool or they look cool, and then you've got your certain clans or whatever the case might be. You know, you always wanna be with the cool kids coz you wanna look cool. But actually, it's just a big deception unfortunately. Then you fall into that and then one thing leads to another and then ja, it's just a whole lot of chaos. And then the arguing starts at home and this starts and obviously, you, you get pretty much diverted which is not a good sign.

F: It sounds to me like your friends seem to have disappointed you.

A: I mean they were an influence as well, but I mean, I would've also been an influence when we were using. There were times when I would use and I would have, and sometimes they would have. But, ja, it is kind of a disappointment in a way.

F: You mentioned earlier that your family is the only ones that have your best interest at heart...

A: Ja, I would think so. Also from the people I've seen from time to time. I've seen it time and time again.

F: So would you say then that your friends...

A: I wouldn't say all people are bad. I mean you can have friends but you have to, you have to pick them very wisely. Like you have to...I donno if you've ever picked cherries or grapes or strawberries, you pretty much have to look and pick the best of them. So it's pretty much the same thing in life. You get good people, you get bad people. So it's for you to make the very careful pick...coz it will have an impact on you.

F: I'd like to talk a little about your experience with your friends.

A: Okay that's fine.

F: In your story, you said that it all started with your trip to Durban with your friends.

A: Yes, it did.

F: So prior to that, there was no interaction with substances in any way?

A: No, but I knew about it. I mean, you'd see it on [in] books, you'd see it on posters. Obviously being curious, you wanna know what it's about. But I don't think that's ever caused me to use you now. We went down for a trip. I was with two of my friends. I was probably about fourteen or fifteen years old; quite young. And we sitting at the Milky Lane, the Joe Cool's area basically. And they met certain people, I think they were from Laudium, or...I'm not, I'm not sure where they were from. I'm assuming they were from Laudium. And they invited us to their room in the Holiday Inn and that's where pretty much everything went from bad to worse hey. So that's where it all begun and obviously when they came back, the addiction hit and then they wanted to use again and again. So it just grew from there.

F: So your first interaction with a substance in that room in the Holiday Inn was with weed?

A: They had other substances but obviously we didn't use it. We used weed. Tjo, it was hectic weed [laughter].

F: Hectic?

A: I remember coming back to the room and the one dude that smoked with us almost jumped out the window of the building.

F: Was that after smoking weed?

A: Ja, he was seeing people chasing him and shit. Because you know, the drugs of today are mixed obviously a lot with chemicals and stuff like that so it's not just straight from the tree anymore. And pretty much the other dude warmed the milo without putting milk so the microwave started smoking. There was just a lot of weird shit happening [laughter]. So ja, from there, we came back and then ag, you know what I've got let's use and then I've got, let's use and then...it started with the beans and then another guy would come with this and then one thing led to another and it was, it was just total chaos after that.

F: What effect do you think your first experience with a substance had on you?

A: You know what, it kinda slowed me down. Everything was a big joke. I think it was quite dangerous though coz we weren't perfectly in our senses. Uhm, so

let's say if I were to get robbed, I wouldn't have remembered it. I wouldn't have seen myself stepping into danger, which was more of a scary thing...But anyway, we got to the room safely. Luckily nothing like that actually happened but, ja, everything was like a big joke you know, at that time. Obviously the weed, what it does is it works with the dopamine cell in the brain And what actually happens is, is not the weed that actually give you the high. It's...dopamine's a happy cell in our brain so it opens that receptors and doesn't allow it to close so we use up a lot more of the cell than we are supposed to. So I think that's where the actual happiness comes in from. But if you look at someone smoking weed...like I would say we smoked for many, many years and uh...as you carry on smoking, you can smoke as much as you want but you won't get that laugh, you won't get same feeling. So the first feeling was awesome. You laugh, you feel this instant rush or whatever it was you know. But as time goes by, it's not there anymore. So it's like chasing something that's never gonna occur again. I donno if you know what I'm trying to say. It's, it's weird.

F: So there's a hunger for that feeling again and yet it's hard to get back.

A: Ja, you'll never, you'll pretty much never get it back, coz you've pretty much damaged the cell and now you keep using, trying to get that feeling back but, it's, it's just never gonna come back. And, I think that's what keeps people using. It's those first moments that you have you know. Like the first time you use ecstasy or CAT, it's an awesome, awesome vibe, but uhm, all of a sudden, you never get that same feeling again. So someone might start smoking and he'll take maybe a quarter of a joint and then maybe a few months later he's smoking a full joint, and then maybe a year later he could be smoking like five or six joints a day trying to get there. But he's still...it's never gonna get there. So it's a challenging one hey.

F: So when you returned home from your holiday, was it that feeling that you describe that you were after that made you decide to explore further?

A: I think when I came back, it wasn't so much the feeling. I think it was more...more the effect of the influence when we came back. You've already done it once with the people so it doesn't seem so bad anymore. You sort of

know each other's secret you know. So it comes your way I guess. And then I guess you say okay, it will just be another feeling like that I mean, it won't be so bad. So, I guess it's a mixture of both.

F: So you were open to experimenting?

A: I guess so. Ja.

F: So what was the next thing you moved onto?

A: And then a friend of mine discovered green beans or what's known as Roshees. Some sort of, uhm, it's a sleeping pill or something. I'm not sure exactly what it is. That was crazy huh. That was the second step and then with the weed...it was quite uh, quite a awesome experience hey. But the sad thing was it made me very forgetful. You would do things when you are on it without remembering anything. That was the sad thing; no one could stop you, you know. You had all this power in the world that you wanted. So obviously it's something to make you sleep, but you fighting the sleep and it creates, creates heavy disturbances, like you could be in a fight and, you could be blue all over your body or something bad could happen to you and you wouldn't, you wouldn't feel anything until the next morning when everything's gone you know. So you pretty much, you totally powerful. It's crazy. It's weird. But memory wise, it's busted. Like, you could put something away and you wouldn't, from when you take the bean until it's over, you wouldn't remember anything in that period of time.

F: So it had a big knock on your memory then?

A: Ja ei. Ja, if you go back say a few hours later there's just no memory left. You wouldn't remember like, okay, maybe I would take my stash and hide it away now because maybe my brains working a bit different, maybe I'm a bit sharper because I'm using my brain more, and then after the high, we may not be able to find our stuff [stash]. [laughter] It's ridiculous [laughter]. So ja, that wasn't too good hey. That was bad experiences. It got us into a lot of fights, you know, stuff like that. For stupid lil reasons. So again, like influence of friends. Maybe one gets in a brawl with another maybe just for looking at someone funny or...you know, something that could just be an innocent persons mistake. Then

all of a sudden you know, everyone's involved in it. For something that just wasn't worth it.

F: I hear that there was an element of power that accompanied your experience. Is it safe to say that it was when you were under the influence that you felt powerful?

A: Yes, most definitely.

F: Can you please explain that to me?

A: I guess it works with all types of drugs. My actual drug of choice after that was CAT. And then there's ecstasy. I mean ecstasy gives is an instant rush that just doesn't get finished. I mean you just don't get tired. I mean it's crazy. And CAT as well, energy wise, I could pull like maybe a 20, 24 hour day without sleeping, without winking. I mean, my mind would be sharper than what it would be normally. Uhm, ja, but then I guess as time goes by it damages you, you know. So it's actually...it's a crazy feeling. It makes you feel like you on top of the world. You don't have those bad days anymore because when you have a bad day, you just use and then your bad days disappear. I guess after stopping you got different ways of dealing with it you know. That's a challenging one. For someone to change, I guess it takes a complete lifestyle change. So everything you used to do sorta went away when you started and then when you stop it's like you this lil boy, lost, and you gotta start all over again. You gotta find how to deal with people, how to talk to people, how to deal with issues coz those bad days do come by, no matter who you are. It's gonna come by. It never stops. I wouldn't say every day's a bad day, but you do get them. It's how you deal with it.

F: I hear such a contrast between feeling so powerful when you were on a high, and then feeling like a little boy again when drugs is removed from your life. I get the image of a strong powerful man under the influence of a drug and then...

A: You start all over again. Ja, you pretty much start all over again. So it will start you over again in all ways. I mean, uhm, mentally coz you've gotta fix whatever you've damaged in your mind, whatever you've damaged in your body; sometimes you can't recover all of it. Financially, obviously you'll never be able

to build wealth when you're using. So pretty much I guess in all aspects of life. And obviously, the people that really cared about you, you've left sort of like a blunder. So, it doesn't mean that once you pull yourself straight you walk back on a red carpet. It's sorta trust that you now gotta rebuild and that doesn't happen overnight you know, coz you had the trust and now it's all sorta disappeared and then...you basically gotta redo everything, from scratch. It's well worth it, I won't lie to you [laughter].

F: So it's a whole redo on life, like having to press a redo button?

A: Ja, pretty much. I think first you gotta go to Doc, go do some Ibogaine so you reset your brain, and then when you come back, you reset your life. Ja, it's a complete lifestyle change. As I told you, I threw my sim card in the ocean. I'll never forget that morning. I pretty much don't remember a lot of the feelings and stuff because I did tell you I chose to forget it; it wasn't something I wanted to hold onto for the rest of my life.

F: Can I ask why?

A: I guess it just wasn't, you know...it's sort of a...a delusion and I guess a lot of people look at it that way as say ag, but it's cool and it looks cool and it works cool. As I told you, you start using it coz it seems like a cool thing to do but actually it's just a big delusion because [of] all the damage it occurs through your life. So, do you wanna walk around with this bad baggage for the rest of your life or do you wanna let go and just start new. It is a whole new lifestyle. I guess if you are starting new, you just gotta start all new, you know. You don't wanna hold onto those feelings and stuff coz the more you think about it, that, that might have caused a relapse, I donno know. Also if I help people, I have a very minimal talk about drugs or bring the word drugs up. They sorta gave me this counselling room and I never liked it coz it had all these drug posters. Say a dude comes in and he's trying to quit and what we doing is basically, we loading into his subconscious more drugs, and what does he do when he goes home. Okay, so even though you are talking to him his head...he's like there's a big picture of cocaine and that's my drug of choice. The first thing he does when he goes home, he goes back to using. So you sorta gotta divert attention.

I guess totally in a new direction. You gotta have a new vision. I donno if you know what I'm saying?

F: I hear you. So what I'm hearing is that it's strategic not to entertain your past and not to entertain thoughts of drugs. I wonder if, sometimes, it's not also related to fear of...

A: Fear of change is a big thing.

F: I acknowledge fear of change on the one hand, but I'm wondering about fear of the baggage...sometimes shutting things out can also be a way of avoiding. The fear that thinking about the baggage, might, as you mentioned, lead to a relapse. In your life, would you say that there's an element of fear of sitting with your past experiences and feelings?

A: No, not pretty much. You know what...I don't know if you've ever heard about Willy Jolly? He's a great African motivational speaker and he gives the perfect example. He says, why is the windshield in your car that big and the rear-view mirror this small. So, it's for us to focus in life [on] where we are heading and not on where we've been coz if you keep looking in the rear-view mirror, you gonna talk about the past, you gonna dwell in the past, and soon you gonna start living in the past. So I think it's just most important to keep looking forward in life. It's also important to know what happened in the past coz I say, the past should be a place of reference, not a place of residence. So before you make a mistake you say, ag, you know what, I did that, I already learnt my lesson from it...do I wanna go through the whole cycle of it again. But I guess that I look so much into the forward...You know it take pretty much four steps for anyone to be, to be successful in life. One if obviously a vision. Uhm, not to look at right now, but where will I be in five years or where will I be in ten years from now. And the next step I always say is decision. There's two type of things. You get a decision where you choose to cut out of things, and a incision where you gonna choose to cut into things. So you can say, okay, this is not good for me, it never worked. I decide to cut it outa my life and sometimes you gotta do that with things like drugs, like some people in your life, some places that you've been going in your life. So there's a lot of things that you gotta decide...you know what, this isn't working for me...you just letting go. Then you see what's

working for you and then you inside on it and then you keep focus and just pretty much receive the things that you heading for in life.

F: I think the idea of being very future focused and moving forward came across rather strongly in your story.

A: Ja, you have to, you know. I'll give you an example. You've been to my store. When I started, it was nothing like it is now. I had this vision of having all these Barbies and Hot Wheels and stuff like that you know. That was actually a vision I had and I focused on it, and now when you finally reach that vision you've sorta got another vision [laughter]. It keeps you occupied and, I think there's a famous saying that goes around...A idle mind's the devil's workshop [laughter]. So as long as you keep your mind on the right track, I guess you not gonna go astray hey.

F: I think that's so...

A: I've seen it also with kids that I help. I helped a kid not long back. Shukr [thank God] he hasn't relapsed or anything. I'll help them, like they'll see me all the time initially and as I'm helping them and I see that they are doing better than I'll go like once a week, then like once a month. You see, you also don't wanna make them dependent on you. And, you know, I was with another kid now the other day and what I noticed was he'd always go and sit up in his room all alone and I guess that's where the shit started coz he had no one to talk to and he's mind would work on all the wrong ideas. What we actually did with him was we broke obviously the ice between the mum and dad and himself. Because of all the disappointment he created, there was a lot of friction. And once we got out, got that outa the way, I encouraged them to play board games you know like Monopoly and Scrabble with the family to get him into the living room and stuff. And I guess, when he was around his family and around people he never had that chance to think about, oh, lemme go use. It sorta removed that whole avenue and was something that really worked. I'm not saying everyone needs to be with family, but if they choose the right friends and they do certain stuff together which is clean fun, I think it'll keep the mind activated. The mind's a very powerful thing. It can do anything you want it to, it can achieve anything you want.

F: It's interesting that you put so much focus on the mind, especially because, uhm, from your story, it seems that the doctor's visit revealed something that really threatened the wellbeing of your mind. Tell me about that experience.

A: Okay I'll tell you what happened at the doctor's visit. Even though I was using at the time...as I told you, drugs give you a very happy, very powerful effect when you start using. I came to a point where even if we were using on a daily basis, there just...wasn't any happiness. I was sort of depressed all the time. Whether you used, whether you never used, there was depression all the time. So, I met this doctor and started getting onto antidepressant pills which I used for couple'a months.

F: Was this a GP?

A: It was an ordinary GP. I don't think a very good one [laughter] coz he wasn't supposed to give me the antidepressants [laughter]. But it was an awesome feeling in the beginning. Uhm, I mean, I just wouldn't give a shit you know. No matter what could happen, it was sorta like a happy pill. I mean, stuff would just fly, fly by you, you know. So that together with a lot of other stuff worked, but I wouldn't advise anyone to take antidepressants. I mean, it takes you out of normality. It's, it's crazy.

F: What do you mean when you say it takes you out of normality?

A: I mean, something could like fall down or something serious could like happen right in front of you and it just, just wouldn't bother you. It's like, everything would be like uh, sort of a joke you know.

F: So as if you detached?

A: Ja. You detached from the world...like you wouldn't know when something's serious and you need to pull yourself together and when not. Everything's just sorta chilled like you know, which uh, which now kinda scares me in a way. So I went one day to his office and he had this new laptop system over there were you could test sort of like your heart and different organs, one being the mind. And messing around I said hey dude, let's test the mind, let's see how your new machine works. When he tested it he told me the pond [pons] which is on the right hand side of the brain, uhm, is only functioning at 6% and that I belong in

a mental institution. I said dude, uh, I don't think your machine's quit well because I think I'm perfectly fine. I know what I'm telling you, I know where I am, I don't think I'm crazy.

F: Why would he say that you belong in a mental institution?

A: Because the pond [pons] was...part of the brain was functioning at such a low rate. Uhm, I mean, if it was still at 40% or 50% or 60% I guess it would be normal. He was looking at it 6% and he was like you know, this part of your brain's actually not functioning, so you literally like walking around with half a brain. It was kind of scary. I thought he was talking shit. But it, it played on my mind coz once the mind's attached to a new idea, I guess, it never leaves it you know.

F: What effect did that have on you?

A: It was terrible. It put me into a scare...I think quite a huge one. I still didn't believe it was the truth, so I went through to Professor Gapol. He was the head of neurology, uhm, pretty much still is in Gauteng, and I told him, hey dude, this is what the guy told me and I donno how true this is you know. So he advised that we do a CT scan so they can actually see what's going on. So obviously it did actually have quite a big impact on me because I guess if it didn't impact me I wouldn't have taken it any further. So ja, it was, it was kinda scary. So we did the CT scan...came back a few days later and he told me the brain looks sorta like a 60 year old. I mean I wasn't even 20 at that time...or just about 20...that means I was like 40 years older actually [laughter]. He said that all he cells were dispersed and that's what's caused all the problems, because as I told you in the start, we would use...smoking weed, would actually use the dopamine cell or ecstasy would use another cell or this would use another cell, you know. So the cells were dispersed, and he told me there's nothing I can do for you, I mean, you just gotta stop and give it time and, I guess, hopefully it will heal. Coz basically, we use a bit, and the balance of the cell recuperates into making it full again but I guess I pretty much drained my resources. And that could have been the possibility for the depression I guess.

F: Hmm, was the doctor aware of your addiction?

A: The GP?

F: Both of them?

A: Yes, I did tell them. Ja, I was very open in that sense. Uhm, and then after that, I was on my way home and I said, oh no, this doesn't look too good and no one can help me so I bought a, a huge stash and I decided you know I'm going away for the weekend and I'm just gonna bust it out you know.

F: What made you feel like that's what you had to do then?

A: I guess it felt like, you know, there wasn't any hope left. But deep in my heart, I knew it wasn't the right thing you know. So anyway, I bought the stash and uh, sitting there buying that very day, changed my view. You know, I looked around me and I said why do people fear me? Why are people scared of me? And as I'm looking and I'm seeing myself around Nigerians, I see the area that I'm in and I said...could this possibly be the reason why people think of me as being a dangerous person even I've never killed anyone or never really harmed anyone? Maybe it's just the places that I'm in, the people I situate myself around. But anyway, I took the stash and I snuffed a few lines then and then on my way home, it just didn't feel right because my brain was telling me, obviously one more. I knew it was becoming a problem coz at that point, I didn't have friends influencing me anymore.

F: So you were doing it alone?

A: Ja, then I realised you know it is a problem but when I wanted to stop, I just couldn't do it anymore so we just continue going you know. And uhm, on my way home, I stopped on the main road and I...I actually stopped for a line but I just couldn't do it, I didn't have the heart anymore. And...I looked up to the sky and I told my creator, you know what, I, I guess I'm the worst of your creation...I mean, you've created me, you've gave me a good body yet I harm it, I don't pray to you, I mean everything I do is just against your command, you know. But I still believe in you...that doesn't make me that bad, and right now, I ask for your help. I actually believe it was a miracle you know. And I went home that day, without having the line. I cried in the side of the road, for, I guess about 5 minutes you know. Anyway, I go home and, my head's again telling me just one

more line because at the end of the day a craving's just a thought. That's where we come back to the mind idea altogether again. And, uhm, I guess...I just wanted to call it quits you know. And I...I opened up all these bags of powder I had. It was quite a few thousand I mean, it was a lot of money I saved up...and I walked in the bathroom and I flushed it down. And I guess that, that was it for me you know. And I swore to myself that that's it. A lot of people will say just one more time or I'll do it once a year but, I guess it doesn't matter if you use it once a year or once a day or once a hour. If you use it, you use it. You pretty much rate it the same you know. The damage is still gonna get to you. So, I guess that's, that's where it all changed. And then I went to my dad. As I say, he was very supportive. Uhm, he wasn't the type of person who'd hit me...obviously maybe one or two times when I was really high when I got home so obviously he gave me one or two shots, but in general he wouldn't hit me. He always believed if you love someone it would, it would make it easier I guess, for me, for me to go back to them, you know. Whereas you get other parents who keep beating the kids and that creates sorta a barrier because it creates fear between the two. So even if you doing something wrong you can't go and talk to them because, if I go tell him I did this, he's gonna whip me, you know what I'm saying. So, I never had that problem, luckily, with my dad. I went to him and I told him I need help, uh, I, I, really need help. I've read about Ibogaine and Doc. My mum spoke to Doc quite a few times and they knew about the Ibogaine and stuff like that. So they asked me a few times in life and uhm, I was never ready to go you know.

F: So your family was aware of the addiction?

A: They were aware coz they'd find stash. Some days I'd come home you know, and I'd be, tjo, I'd be totally busted. Uhm, I had few death experiences while I was using.

F: What does that mean?

A: I...I'll get there [laughter]. So anyway, speaking to Doc, what he said was, if he's not ready to change, you can't obviously change someone who doesn't wanna change, you know.

F: True.

A: And I remember when I went in, it was I think, two days before my birthday, and I told them, maybe I wanna go in on my birthday you know. They asked me do you wanna have one last party and I said oh shit no, I'm done. That's where the changing point was. Yes I did have a few death-like experiences. One was I think in Rosebank...where there was sorta like the roshee but in liquid form...

F: Okay.

A: ...and uhm, it didn't hit us instantly as obviously the pill would, and we kept on drinking and drinking, where I flew out of my mind. I think it took me like a day or two to obviously come right, I had just collapsed. It was quite bad. They gave me a couple of espressos and stuff, trying to wake me up because obviously it's a sleeping type of medication. Uhm, that was quite scary at once. Uhm, the second was in Sun City where, there was sorta a mixer that guys would put into...there was roshees in the champagne and then there was ecstasy. So it was a big contra version of the two, where ecstasy brings one up and rochees bring one down which obviously caused some sort of chemical reaction in my body which caused me to fall as well. So ja, that was another big, big no-no. So, ja, I did, I did hit the bottom of the bottom, if I could put it to you that way. And I guess, that's why when I help people now, it sort of makes a difference because they know, okay, this guy was once right in the dumps and he managed to pull himself out...that means there is hope for me. I guess that's where the difference comes in you know. Ja, that's pretty much it you know. Ja, and then...I went through. I remember reaching the clinic. They gotta do a liver function and a stress ECG before they can give you Ibogaine to do it in a safe complex you know. Doc's centre is, I would say, the safest centre in the world to use it as he's got all the right tools, he knows the product and it works quite well. They couldn't give it to me same time. I mean it took, round about...that time it was a six week course and I think it took about two weeks before they could actually give me my first dose. The liver wouldn't allow, allow me to have it you know...it was very high risk. So obviously it damaged a lot more of my organs aside from the mind, that we never picked up. I don't know if you know what I'm trying to say?

F: Yes, yes.

A: So it took some time and then eventually he did the dose for me, and uhm, I felt much better after that. It was a very scary experience...very intense. But the best thing that ever happened to me in my life. I don't think it's, it's easy for people to leave any some sort of addiction or, especially drug addiction in particular, without Ibogaine...to be honest with you. If my cells are all damaged in my brain, let's say my pond [pons] was damaged, my rational thinking cell was damaged and all my other cells were damaged in my brain...talking to me is sort of like talking to a brick wall, I mean, nothing goes into the people. Whereas, what Ibogaine did was within six hours, it re-boosted all my cells. I mean, I had a brand new brain overnight which no doctor could do for me and no one else could do for me. It was actually that evening that I heard about Ibogaine as well...it was like they all came together...that's why I say I think Allah [God] really answered my prayer. Coz when I got home, a few hours later someone actually came and said but didn't you hear about but there was a risk of death...people weren't very certain of it at the time, and I said, well I've got nothing left to loose. I mean, let's, let's go and do it you know. And uhm, it changed my life totally. I mean, it helped me to forget everything I needed to forget. It gave me that chance to, to restart you know, totally fresh. I'll never forget the next morning...the evening was, was crazy. I mean, people say you hallucinating, like how you would on acid. I never liked acid. I took it once, I hated it. It was the most creepiest stuff I ever too in my life...I mean it's awful...you see things that's not really there...it was weird. That was sheer influence [laughter], but anyway...you know, we wanted to test everything that was out there. And, uhm, what actually happened was, when I took the Ibogaine, it was...I wouldn't say it was like a drug or hallucination, it's...it's not a nice feeling to be on it. It's sort of intense. You look at me and I look like I'm sleeping. I can barely move my body. For those six hours it's, it's horrible. But, the after result, is amazing. And it's fully herbal. I donno if you've done any research on it?

F: I have looked into it yes.

A: So it's basically the second root of the tree from Cameroon. What happens is you sorta like hear these sounds in your ears and it's scary hey. I remember the one vision that I've seen...I saw the devil and it was sorta a cliff, a beautiful

green cliff, there was a tree, and I was walking towards this cliff and as it went down there was just this fire, which I guess was hell. Uhm, and then what happened was, there was this gold which came from the sky which was written Allah [God] in it...and the devil was waiting to throw, to push me into the fire, and it sorta just gripped the devil and threw him into the fire and I ended up in safety, I donno if you know what I'm saying.

F: I hear you.

A: I guess it was trying to tell me, which kind of signified something in my own life to me, to tell me, you know what...I was on my way to hell and you know what, there was just a second chance for me...so Allah [God] came by, He protected me from this and He's given me a second chance to go and do whatever I had to.

F: That's amazing.

A: And that's the way I read it out you know. Among a lot of other scary shit I've seen. I mean, it's like a real life avatar movie of your own life, like a 4-D avatar movie...it's crazy, I promise you. The visions are real. I mean, like you could have an argument...some of my death-like experiences...they would be real. It's like I'm living in that moment, at that time, looking at myself...the sounds are real, the things the people were saying at that time...and, as it's coming to my brain it's all getting deleted. You didn't like the image, sometimes it would scare you and you'd blink and the next image would come up. It was a horrible feeling, I won't lie to you. You didn't feel good at all, but the following morning I was kind of depressed because...fear...like I always say fear is something...like you get good fear and you get bad fear. Sometimes...people always have fear. To grow in life, people are scared, like...what will happen if I get that money? Or what happens if I get that degree? What will happen to me? People won't like me anymore? So they won't get that goodness in life coz they afraid they afraid of good things that could happen. Some people are afraid of bad so what happens is it keeps them sort of in a stuck motion...I guess. So as you were saying...fear, fear plays a very important role, but all this fear just disappeared. It was amazing you know. I could go back, I mean, as I say I couldn't remember...they told me my pond [pons] was bugged and my

cells...but after Ibogaine I could remember, my nursery school friends, I could remember the toys I took to the class, I could remember my teacher. Shit, I could go back to when I was five years old. I mean, there were certain things that I didn't choose to remember, like the really bad images. I guess Ibogaine just deleted it for me or I just chose not to remember it, but it was amazing you know. I could hold onto the good memories and I could start all over again. But I was depressed for about three days after that, it was horrible, because everything you've been hiding away your whole life sorta just bubbles in front of you within six hours.

F: It's quite an overwhelming flow of things.

A: Ja, it was sorta like a reset on the brain, but you know what, you come out and then you look at... example, just a normal tree and you'd be able to admire it for hours and think you know what, that is your Allah's or that's your creator's creation and how did He create it that the leaves fall? So religiously or spiritually, it gives you an awakening like you can't believe. It's amazing. So all these things start coming clear and it gives you enough time, uhm...they say it lasts in the system close to about three months in your system. Three months is more than long enough for someone to restart their life because once you fall into your new habits, you sorted.

F: Wow, it sounds quite powerful and...

A: Oh it's really powerful [laughter]. It's very intense.

F: and scary too at the same time?

A: Ja. And then after that I was still at the centre for about six weeks. I think they kept me a lil longer. I was a bit different from the other kids you know. A lot of them would sit up at the house and they'd be talking about what they would do with drugs and I was like, I'm here not actually to talk, I was here to change. So I would always sit outside Doc's office, at the wall, and whenever he'd come out, we'd have a few minutes to talk and I guess, that's where our relationship actually started...because I was determined, I was going to make a change for myself, and that's where the difference comes in. So, if a parent tells someone you know what, you gotta stop, or someone forces someone into a centre, the

results that you get won't be the same like if someone decides for themselves, I've had enough and I need to change. So you need to make that person realise you know, what you doing's wrong and you need to change and then obviously get them the help that they need to obviously change. Where, if someone forces someone to do something, the result's not really gonna be there.

F: So it sounds like choice is a very important component.

A: Choice is a very big component. Uhm, obviously when you using drugs, we've got the rational thinking cell in our brain and, uhm, that controls choice. It separates us from animals in a way, together with the limbic [limbic] system. If you look at the rational thinking cell, I would call it the cell of choice. Everyone has choice. They can't say no God meant this for me that's what I'm having because that I would say is bullshit. Where in a sense, let's say you walking in front of me and you drop your purse, I have a choice. I can either take it for myself and take what I want from it or I can stop you and give it back to you. So we all do have choice. Due to people using intoxicant and drugs, what happens is these rational thinking cells get damaged and that's a very dangerous thing because like in my case, the mind was in power and if your mind controls you, you're in a bad state but if you control your mind, I guess than you pretty much in a safe place.

F: Okay. So if you think about the idea of choice, what role would you say choice had in your life?

A: Choice...I've had my choices when I was using, it just wasn't...I guess I was still stuck in the delusion you know which is a scary thing cause it doesn't look bad up until something bad really happens.

F: And what was that for you?

A:I don't remember [laughter]. If you want me to be honest, I don't remember. But ja, choice plays a major, major role. I mean, if you decide you wanna do this, you can do it. As I told you, whatever you wanna do you can do, whatever you wanna be you can be.

F: So do you think that choice has a bigger role in your life now than when you were in going through your addiction?

A: Definitely. You'll always have those choices. Now I can...I would say, I can sort of control my mind. We have three parts of the brain. One is obviously the conscious mind where one thought goes in at a time and it depends on what you do with it...you can either let this lil seed grow into a huge tree or you can say, you know what, you not good for me, you disappear and let another thought come in. We get some like I think couple' a thousand thoughts that go through our conscious mind every day. The mind's a very powerful thing. I mean it's...a guy like Einstein only used like 8% 'til the time he died so, people like us, I guess like 3 r 4 % of our brain's capacity we actually use. Then you get the subconscious mind which is the majority part of our brain where, things from our past, everything we've seen, everything we heard, all gets recorded. Now sometimes, you'll meet...I actually meet a lot of people who'll be telling you what happened to them like ten years ago. Uhm, one kid I'm busy tryna help now, I told you his sister came to see me. He's like talking like talking about stuff that happened to him like twelve years ago. He's like stuck in that, in that area...which is kinda a bad thing...that's where the problem comes in where we don't have the ability, when we using, to make those choices. I guess that's why I say, choice back then...I don't think we had the ability to make a choice because we've damaged our cell...the biggest gift ever given to humanity which is choice, was taken away from us. So he doesn't realise he has a choice. He doesn't realise this is doing bad to me today because he's still stuck twelve years behind time. I donno if you know what I'm trying to say?

F: I do, I hear ...

A: Then obviously we get the unconscious mind which is the dreams...and that's the beauty of Ibogaine because it, it doesn't only take out the cravings of the drugs, uhm, because as I say a craving is a thought. It re-fixes the cells. It re-fixes the neurosystem, and together with that, all the stuff that we've been accumulating in our subconscious mind. It's like...come I put it to you this way...everything you've seen, everything you heard, everything that happened to you in your whole life is being recorded. So, it's like you writing it on a paper, day to day, thing for thing. I mean, you must remember, we absorb everything at once. Let's say, every minute we can write a full page or every five minutes. What is your office gonna look like if you just took all these pages and you keep

throwing them in this office? It's gonna be a mess you know. So, what this thing does, it's basically like a disk defragment on a computer. So it says okay, you don't need this, you don't need this, you don't need this, and it chucks it out. And then it says, okay, you need this for reference, and you need this for reference, these are good memories, and it also sorta packs everything decently into folders. So now you free to think. And I would say, someone who comes out of Ibogaine obviously, the mind functions at a much higher level. Like sometimes, I can look three or four years in front and I can keep my focus three or four years in front. Whereas a normal person can't do that. I donno if you know what I'm trying to say?

F: Yes, I hear you.

A: So we can sorta look outa the box and we can keep our focus on outa the box. I donno if you ever watched the secret?

F: I haven't.

A: It's a good movie. There's a book on it as well. It says like if you keep your eyes on something that you like, it will definitely come to you. It's the law of the universe. The same way you get law of gravity...no matter if you a good person or a bad person, if you jump of a building you gonna hit the ground. No matter who you are. You can pray all day, you still gonna hit the ground [laughter]. In the same way, there's laws in the universe and one is the law of attraction. So whatever we keep our focus on, will definitely come to us. Now the problem with man is we very impatient. So we'll put our wish out there and we won't really hold onto it coz we'll say, ag shit, this thing's not really coming my way. So what happens in this sorta seed just goes all the way back in, whereas, if you keep your eye growing, it will automatically come to you. Like, I'll give you an example. Sometimes I'd imagine you know, I wish to be driving this car and I wouldn't say it's always a possibility because, you don't always have the funds or whatever the case may be. On my way home that day though, I'll see at least three or four vehicles like that before I reach home because I attracted that into my life. I donno if you know what I'm saying?

F: Yes, I hear you.

- A: So whatever you attract is what's gonna come to you. Now when you using drugs, all you think about is drugs and every time someone pisses you of...it becomes their way of dealing with their situation. Like you might get upset with your husband and you'll most probably shout at him you know or I would scream at someone, I guess, that's how we would deal with it. Some people would go sit in the room and cry; that's their way of dealing. Whereas someone who's using substances, as soon as someone triggers his mind, because of the limbic [limbic] system – it's sort of a graph in the back of our brain and it's got sorta a graph which weighs joy and pleasure and pain. So as soon as the mind goes into pain, it tells the brain, you know what, go and do something that will make you happy. Now obviously we have the ability of choice and we can say that's not good for us so we'll just keep doing whatever we were doing. Whereas a guy using drugs doesn't have the ability of choice so he'll instantly go back to his drug of choice, get his weight of pleasure and then his problem is sorted, not realising he's making the problems around him much, much worse.
- F: From what you're saying, it sounds as if you didn't have much control over exercising choice...
- A: No, not at all.
- F: during the period of your life when you were addicted.
- A: No, not at all, no.
- F: How would you describe it presently, in your recovery stage of life?
- A: I can control everything. I can control every thought in my mind. I can control if I wanted to talk to you, what do I wanna tell you. I control where I wanna go. I control everything that comes in my mind, every thought. Not to say I don't get bad thoughts. I mean, we all get evil thoughts...that's the devil's job I guess [laughter]. But you know, you have the option – do I want to entertain it, do I want to leave it? I guess I can control all of it. I wouldn't say I'm a saint, but ja, I can control whatever I want in my life.
- F: What does that mean for you? Moving from having little say or control over choice to being in complete control over the choices and decisions you make.

A: That's what I say you know...it was the best gift in life that was stripped away, taken from me. So...I would say it's almost everything, coz when you can make choices, you basically in control, and that makes a big difference. So sort of when you using, you sorta like this robot that's got no choice and you just do whatever comes your way. Where now you got choices...do I wanna do this or that? You in control, and that's amazing...of your own life, of your own gift that was given to you. I guess we all going to be questioned on it [by God] so the thing is, what do you answer in that I've abused my body and I've done all of this you know. When you know you going to the One who created you. Now at least I can go back and say, you know what, I made a difference. You know one day and I sat thinking, one day I'm gonna die and Allah's [God's] gonna ask me what did you do for humanity?... and I just had no answer, I just couldn't find a answer for it. At that very moment...they asked me many times to join this organisation and I just...in the start I never felt I was ready and I just felt no, it wasn't my thing. And at that very moment I realised you know what, I know all the ropes. I can help someone. Why wouldn't I do that? And I guess, that's the only reason why I came here, because maybe somewhere, some day, somehow, someone might read something that you wrote and it changes just one person's life, and that's priceless. So ja, that's the only reason that I have entertained your, your assignment [laughter], if you look at it that way. So ja, it's amazing you know. So now you help people and it's rewarding, it's really amazing. So now I can go back and say okay, so I did the damage, but as least I recovered it so, You can only punish me for a while [laughter] but I don't think You will cause you merciful you know [laughter].

F: Having control in your recovery journey sounds very liberating?

I: Absolutely. You sorta take control of your own life again. Take control of your own mind. Like they all say, a mind is an excellent servant but a terrible master. So to have control of your mind alone I guess is positive enough because it can let you achieve anything you wanna achieve. If you've got control of your mind than I guess you've got pretty much everything. The thing that I appreciate the most or the most positive thing is to have control of my body and control of my mind. And when you have that, you can pretty much achieve anything. Mind, body and soul. If you get those three things back, than you've pretty much got

everything. You can't have your soul when you on drug coz you forever in a intoxicated state, you losing your health and obviously your mind gets trapped with whatever chemicals are going in. So when you recover, you get control of your mind, body and soul and when you have that then everything else can just follow. And I guess that's the most beneficial thing that I've ever recovered is having yourself back after losing yourself when you were on drugs. You free.

F: I see that your relationship with Allah [God] is quite important to you.

A: Ja, it sort of growed [grown]. As I said you know, it's change. In a sense being, we look at life more clearly. You meet some people and they'll tell you, we waiting for a miracle and I'd say but, if you look at the sky, it's a miracle, for example. In a sense being there's no pillars holding it, but it's still standing or Allah [God] will take this dirty water and He'll bring it back clean through clouds or whatever His filtration system is. And you start realising how powerful He is because He did help me change. As I said, it all changed with a prayer you know?

F: Yes, I remember your prayer.

A: So that prayer helped me immensely in that change. I guess He still helps me because we still have bad days and I guess now I've got different ways of dealing with it. Sometimes I'll shout, but many times I'll go pray and I'll say You guide me, You know what's best for me, You'll do it for me you know. And things will start going in the direction, not always the direction you planed it to go in coz sometimes you don't always know what's best for yourself I guess, but He does coz He's the only one who knows the future. So sometimes He'll do things differently which kinda annoys people because you'll, you know, you'll say but I've been planning for this and it sorta goes in another direction, but I guess He always knows what's best for you so you sorta got just put your faith in Him, do what's right and everything sorta just falls in place.

F: So faith has been quite a pillar for you on your recovery journey?

A: Faith is a, it's a very big pillar you know. You'd be totally lost without it.

F: Your prayer as you wrote it in your story was so profound. In your prayer, you refer to yourself as a terrible person. I'm wondering about that.

- A: I guess I'm still a bad person, I still do wrong, and 'til now when I pray I'd say God first forgive me for the things that I've done wrong coz day to day I mean, we don't follow all the commandments, we sinful, I mean, we men [human]. Not to say that my sins now are as big as it was in the past, but we still commit sin. So, first I'll always ask for forgiveness and then I'll ask for what I want.
- F: ...would you still describe yourself as a terrible person?
- A: No, not really [laughter]
- F: How would you describe yourself now?
- A: I wouldn't describe myself in the same way now. I think I'm a fairly normal person now [laughter]. I go to work, I work honestly, and I've got my family. But, as I say, ja, we do do wrong, sometimes we miss our prayers or we might, you know, talk to someone in a way we shouldn't have, we might look at someone the way we shouldn't have, or sometimes we'll get evil thoughts in our minds. So I would say it's all minor, normal stuff I guess. Whereas in the past, ja, you were a terrible person coz you mixed with the wrong crowd, you become selfish where you won't worry about people other than yourself, you only look what's your benefit. I guess that's where people go back to the friends coz you like I can use with my friends and that's what I like doing so, that's the reason they actually called friends I guess. Whereas if you really look at it, everything you've been doing in the past was wrong, you've just been destroying yourself, it's total destruction basically. Whereas now you can do things differently, you can look after yourself, you can do different things all the time.
- F: You described your trip to Durban as the start of the destruction of your life. Would you say that destruction has changed into something else?
- A: It's changed into something better. You know, out of every evil comes good or out of every bad comes good. So okay, maybe I damaged a lot of my own life and health, luckily my brain got fixed...from all that evil, which was quite a few years I was using, the good that came out was that today I can help other people.
- F: Okay. So if you defined it, that part of your life, as a destruction then, what name would you give it now, your present life?

A: Tjo, that's a tough one [laughter]. I wouldn't know hey, I really wouldn't know what to call it. It's not something that I'd be proud of, not something that I'd like to carry with me, but I guess that was what it is hey.

F: Hmm, do you think your life is opposite to destructive now?

A: Ja, totally.

F: How would you describe it now?

A: It's awesome now. You enjoy the finer things in life. Everything that's been put in there to enjoy you know. Family being number one. Like, people always ask me A you rich? I always say I don't ever wanna be rich and, well actually, I'm not rich, but anyway I don't wanna be rich. I wanna be wealthy and there's a very diverse difference between the two. Wealthy means all the things that make you feel good in life, your family, the people you choose to be with, uhm, your health, helping other people, your job – if you like it. So you take all these things together and you know when something makes you feel good...you take all these things and you just want an abundance of them in life, and I guess that's what makes you feel good. Like on my end, the counselling really...you know when you can take someone who was where I was, the destructive state of life, and you can bring them to the normal state of life...you know what, it's priceless. I guess that's wealth, that's what makes me happy. You know, I went to go visit a guy I helped a few months ago, he's doing really really well. He's actually started to study hafez [studying the Qu'ran] again, so he decided you know what, I'm going to spend the rest of his life just pleasing my creator. I told him I was happy with his decision. I went by his house, he wasn't there, but his mum tells me, over the past four months that he's been clean, it's like a blessing to be home. There's no arguing, there's no fighting, and you know, when you hear things like that...it's, it's priceless. You can't put a price on it.

F: That's beautiful A. I think that it also relates to forgiveness. You mentioned forgiveness in a few sections of your story...in your prayer, in your interaction with your parents, and even now you spoke about building trust again. It sounds like forgiveness is also important in your journey.

A: Ja, I guess it should be in everyone's life hey. I've forgiven everyone who's harmed me in my life you know, even if they influenced me or not because you can't forgive yourself if you don't forgive others. Now, if the Creator is the most powerful being there is you know, He's created everything, He's created everyone. If He can forgive us, who are we not to forgive. Ja, you'll never forgive yourself unless you forgive others and what others have done to you. So you've sorta gotta let go. I don't say always forget coz you need to know, okay that's bad company so if I go there something bad's gonna happen. You sot of gotta forgive from your heart and say to yourself, you know what, I'm not gonna carry this with me, I'm not gonna carry this grudge with me. It's very popular among people to say you know that person did that to me, one day I'm gonna do this to them you know. So they, they accumulate this hate in them...it's like you carrying somethings and you growing this thing in you which actually stops you from being the person you wanna be and from living the life you wanna live. For something that someone's done to you and they've already forgotten about it and you'll hear people talking about it thirty or forty years later. I mean, that's ridiculous. Or else, it creates a lot of problems in families because now, you'll have two families or two brother or cousins, or whatever the case is, it's something lil, and now there's this sort of grudge and this hate starts building and they go into total diverse ends, which is just not fair. So, if you are wrong, I guess it's never too late to say you sorry, it doesn't cost anything, and it's just worth letting go.

F: So what I'm hearing is that forgiveness plays an important role in moving forward.

A: I would think so...definitely. Like with me, if I'm upset with you I'd tell you the way it is and I would talk to you five minutes later as if nothing happened. Because I don't wanna build all of that in me. It's like a bottle, and you gonna keep putting all of that in, and in, and in, when the bottle explodes, Jesus, all hell breaks loose [laughter]. You don't want that type of problems, you know what I mean. So rather deal with something while it's there and let go.

F: I get the feeling that it was quite different when you were abusing substances. Now there's a great focus on moving forward, and forgiveness is part of that

process. Would it be fair for me to say that there was a sense of being stuck when you were abusing substances?

A: Yes. For example, I could never grow in life...in any direction of life. Financially you'd never grow. Relationship wise you'd never grow. No matter what I could try in life, I would never complete it. I would go like 99% and I would just leave it. I studied air-conditioning and refrigeration – I was an A student, and I've, I've never practised it. I mean, it's flippen weird. I've done that in many areas of life, it just wouldn't get done. The way I look at it, if you've got a child and you child is using, you not gonna give him more funds to, to feed his habit. I guess the Creator looks at things the same way where he says okay, you doing wrong with the wealth or you doing wrong with your health so what does He do, He stops what He's giving you or He limits what He's giving you 'til you can pull yourself straight. Whereas after I stopped, I mean it took like still two-three-four-six months, and that all just started opening, it just started coming. It's weird. I guess the same way you gotta prove to your Creator and say I'm done now, when the time's right, He will give it to you. So He sorts of limits you coz the more he's gonna give you, the more you gonna destroy yourself. He'll say okay I can't give this guy too much coz he's gonna damage himself so He limits, limits, and then eventually give it all back to you.

F: So your experience sounds as if it was an opening of mind, and an opening of life as well.

A: Ja, it opens everything up. You sort of lock yourself in a nut shell I guess, when you use you know. You end up in this one lil avenue and you can't really move forward. In recovery, you'll see different things. You'll achieve different things without being caught up in a spiral. The most important thing I think is forgiveness. You gotta forgive even people who harmed you because if you forgive people and you forgive yourself, it will be easier to go on in life. If Allah [God] can forgive, who are we not to forgive? Without forgiveness you'll always hold that grudge and you'll always be stuck back. So to be free, forgiveness is a very major part.

F: Coming out of rehab...like you said, it was about restarting. In your story, the first thing you mention about coming out of rehab was being received by your parents.

A: Yes, they picked me up at the centre and we stayed the night at the hotel. I remember waking up the next morning, beautiful morning. It was the first time I ever got a beautiful sunrise over the ocean. I've never seen that before, I've seen it after [addiction] but not before you know. I said I'm going out for a walk. I remember sitting on the beach, the sun's rays, and at that point I knew I had to start everything new. I didn't want to back to the same company so I said, let's see which of these people – none of them actually knew I went to the centre – which one of these actually care about me? Who will come and visit me? Who's actually the true people in my life? So I removed the sim card - well in rehab you don't actually have your cellphone and stuff – I threw it into the ocean and I said I'm let a new number and whoever comes to visit e will actually be my true friends. And likely, none of them came...'til now none of them came, 'til this very day [laughter]. The one day they came, they were three of them. One guy got a new BMW, I'll never forget that day. they came to my house and it wasn't to visit me, it was sorta just to show me like I've grown in life, and where are you, you know. Sort of, sort of like in a show-off way. At that time, I was doing quite well for myself. I had a Z4 and an M3 convertible in the garage, and I looked and said that's a beautiful car, and I pressed the button for the garage and I just saw the eyes go big and I said, just get out of here and never ever come back again coz what you is totally wrong you know. I, I've never liked to show what I've accumulated in life, but in that present moment, it was just the right tool that I needed to get rid of them. 'til this day I still see them – I'll meet them in like cafes and shops- and I'll greet them with the hand [waves] and that's pretty much where it stops. Now that I'm married, and I guess I've got my kid, my family is pretty much my friends. Before I was married, my dad sorta became my best friend. I'm quite thankful that I actually changed coz we grew sorta this friendship you know. Uhm we were more like friends, yet he was my father. He was my pillar, my banking, he was sorta my everything. And what actually happened at that point, coz he was my mentor as well, he taught me a lot that I know today as well. What happened is the day that I lost him...it was

a very tough and emotional point to go through. The thing is, when I lost him, I didn't have that much regret, I can live with it because even though I messed up in my life...now that he's gone and I'll never see him again 'til we meet in paradise, pretty much, I don't have any regret, I can actually live with it coz while he was here I spent that time with him. You've built that good relationship. I've managed to fix what I had to. It didn't happen over a month, it didn't happen over two months, it took years and as years went, we just got closer and closer. So wherever we'd go, we'd go together you know. It was really awesome. So for a person who's trying to stop...I guess he's staying with his wife or his parents...I guess they also have a particular role in helping the person succeed in their life, in recovery. Not to say now go and give them everything the next day that come out of the centre, but you also gotta play a role in supporting them, in growing a relationship, and help them start a new lifestyle.

F: What role do you think your dad played in that?

A: You know I think it was a two way thing. I actually joined him in his cycle company after rehab. I also sort of changed in a way where I would choose to spend most of my time with him. He was willing to help me in that sense and he also spent most of his time with me. That's pretty much where the relationship just grew and grew.

F: So it was hard losing him.

A: Very...I guess it is for anyone who know. I guess you not human if you don't feel it. I think in the other end, where people are still using...they don't talk to their parents for years sometimes coz they wanna define their habit as being right and obviously as I started you know...parents feel it very important that they guide you in the right direction coz they care for you. So when they using then the parents are like no that's wrong, or no leave that, and they don't like what they saying so it creates fighting amongst the two and then, uhm, they don't see their parents for years or they leave things in a ugly way, and then you lose your parent. I guess it'll be a lot harder coz how do you live with that for the rest of your life? I...I just can't seem to understand that. I think that would be, tjo, that would be terrible. I guess parents prayers are also quite important so you should accumulate what you can.

F: Okay. I remember when speaking to your mum the first time I came to see you, she mentioned that the time you lost your dad was a time you were gaining a wife.

A: Yes, it was three weeks to my wedding. That's where I stopped planning [laughter], from that very moment. Everything was done. All that needed to be one was that she [mother] needed to buy her clothes and he needed to buy his. I mean the plane tickets were booked – my wife's originally from Cape Town. The hotels were booked, the wedding plans were done. It was just a matter of getting on to the plane, and having the wedding, and coming home. So we had all these plans that things were gonna go in one direction, but obviously, the Creator had another plan. So pretty much, it was a very emotional stage. When you talk of mixed emotions, you donno if you gotta smile, you donno if you gotta cry, but it was the way He planned it. Believe it or not my wife's got so many of my dad's habits, it's unbelievable [laughter]. It's scary in a way [laughter]. So it's like I've lost one, and I've got another one you know.

F: Can you tell me a little about how you and your wife met?

A: So you know after stopping...I've always loved my cars, especially the converstables and I'd just drop the roof – as I prospered- and I wold just drive on a Sunday afternoon, I would just cruise. I met a friend who used to fix these type of cars and I used to love to visit him. They were a very simple family. Every week when I would go on my cruise I would stop there for like half an hour. One day I was joking with him and I told him coz you from Cape Town, you gotta find me a wife from Cape Town, and he said to me a friend of mine's daughter from Cape Town is actually up in Johannesburg – he passed away many years, her dad passed away I think when she was about 12. So she also had quite a tough upbringing. Then obviously, I said no man, I'm not ready now, I'm not interested. I mean, I was just joking. And he says, no man she's a beautiful person, just go and meet her. And I wondered if I'm really ready for a relationship. I was afraid that if I got into a relationship and things didn't work out, that I would relapse and I didn't want that to happen you know. But anyways, he persisted and I went to meet her. I remember we went to Jimmy's Prawns and we set for almost an hour just talking you know, before we even

ordered the food and I said if we not gonna order now we going home hungry. I guess we just clicked from there. She was in a sense also afraid of being in a relationship so she would try to push me away every now and then to say, what if something goes wrong you know. But ja, we've managed to fix it uhm, things worked out quite well.

F: That's wonderful. And then your marriage was soon followed by a lil boy.

A: Ja, you know...he's my reason to...to keep living in life. He gives me a lot of strength. After losing my dad, even though the wedding was very close after, I didn't work for about four months. I would go to work but I just couldn't do it. I would stand there and I would be dazed. I think the thing being coz I worked with my dad, there was a lot of emotion involved. I would come home, things were falling apart. When I heard she was pregnant, it sorta gave me a chance to pick up again where I knew I had to pull up my socks and do what I have to. So ja, he changes my life totally, it's an amazing feeling. There's never a dull moment in life. My wife and kid. My family plays a very major role coz it keeps you going all the time, makes you wanna do more in your life, makes you wanna achieve more in your life. My work also keeps me busy and I enjoy doing what I do.

F: So you had to be his dad. That was a new role in your life.

A: I guess. Ja, it's awesome but it also came with a lot of responsibility all at once. So you have to sort of grow up really, really fast you know. And that's a sad thing coz lotsa parents only have this one kid, and they using and I guess, if the parent were to go and somebody had to take responsibility there wouldn't be that point to obviously do that. So, a lot of lives get affected by one person using, it's never just the person using. That's why I always say it's selfish coz even when I was using it could cause a lot of commotion in the home with the people I lived with. And I'm seeing it now even in counselling as well. It's not just the person using, it's the entire household that sort of falls apart. Sort of like your body. If your leg is sore, your entire body pains. If one family member users, the entire family suffers unfortunately.

F: That point comes in a lot when you speak about the destruction while you were abusing. Was the effect that it was having on your family an important reason for you to change?

A: Yes, I mean it was always arguing, always fighting and swearing. My dad was very patient. I mean I would walk in the house at like two or three in the morning, and he would sit on the couch waiting for me, and when I walked in would go. He'd always wanna see if I come home fine you know. So that I guess was a scary thing. I guess if I had a chance again, I'd do a lot of things different to what I did in the past. Also, education wise you know, I was quite a good at school. I was a A-grade student at Mathematics. And when you started using drugs, your diversion in life started changing. What happens is you got more focus on having the fun times or whatever you might call it and your education stats slacking at the same time. So, I cuda been something totally different, but I'm happy with who I am, I'm happy with what I have, but I'm saying you could, we could have been a lot more in life if we didn't waste our time doing drugs.

F: You mentioned just now that you'd make a lot of different choices.

A: A lot.

F: If the Adam that sits with me today could tell the "terrible person" you described yourself as in the past anything, what would you say to him?

A: Tell him to do exactly what he did [laughter]. I guess you gotta tell him you know...show them right from wrong and obviously guide them onto a life without drugs, without abuse.

F: Who's them?

A: Well whoever is out there willing to change themselves.

F: Okay, but what about you. What would you say to yourself?

A: I would tell myself the exact same thing. Life with drugs is not worth it. A life with alcohol or clubbing or whatever it might be, is just not worth it. I would do exactly what I'm doing today. I think I've done the right things in life; a bit late, but I got there eventually [laughter].

F: How do you feel about, about this Adam?

A: Oh I love him. He's awesome. I'm not trying to say that I'm obsessed with myself or anything, but I love the person I've become from where I was to where I've come...I love the person I am...I'm happy. The thing that I appreciate the most or the most positive thing is to have control of my body and control of my mind. And when you have that, you can pretty much achieve anything. Mind, body and soul. If you get those three things back, than you've pretty much got everything. You can't have your soul when you on drugs coz you forever in a intoxicated state, you losing your health and obviously your mind gets trapped with whatever chemicals are going in. So when you recover, you get control of your mind, body and soul and when you have that then everything else can just follow. And I guess that's the most beneficial thing that I've ever recovered is having yourself back (after losing yourself when you were on drugs). You free.

F: And how did you feel about the person you were?

A: I felt useless, like hopeless. Sometimes when I took I felt powerful, like I got this ego that I'm better than other people and I'm braver than other people. I guess that's not what life's about you know. So ja, I like this person I am now. It's not about ego. It's about just, you can sit with normal people and finding the good in them.

F: The interesting thing that power back then almost made you seem invincible.

A: Pretty much yes. But it's never worth it. That's why I say I'd do a lot of things differently, that being one.

F: As you talk right now, I hear such a powerful person.

A: In a different way.

F: In a totally different way.

A: Ja. It doesn't mean you need to have physical strength to be powerful. You gotta do it in different ways. I guess words can do a lot of things. It goes back to the mind all over again. You'll see these boards everywhere – mind, body and soul. I always say, out of the three, a lot of people differ with me, but I say the mind's the most powerful because if your mind's not in absolute control by

yourself, you can't focus on your body or your soul. So mind's definitely number one that you gotta look after and then the others will just follow.

F: Okay. I just have two more themes I'd like us to chat about.

A: Okay, that's fine.

F: You spoke about coming from quite a close-knit community.

A: Yes.

F: I was just wondering, did you find that your community had any influence on your journey through addiction and recovery? Society, immediate and extended family?

A: I guess family plays a major role. As I said, most of the people I used with were people from my community. Unfortunately I chose the wrong people in my community to be with you know, and that didn't help very much. I guess for a couple'a months after stopping my addiction, I wanted to start a whole new life, so what would happen is I would go to work, come home, watch tv, go for a drive on a Sunday, and as I got stronger, I would start coming out. Today I totally love my community again because I started to choose better people among the community to be around you know. The thing I like of my community, being a Muslim, there's a lot of mosques and being amongst your own people in a sense is awesome coz you don't have that much of difference in culture. Growing up as a kid we'd play a lot of sport in the community and there were always centres out there willing to help but unfortunately we didn't want the help coz we didn't know the dangers that were involved in it at that point. So, community does play, I would say a big role you know.

F: How did the people in your life react to your addiction?

A: Hmm, they would tell you that it's wrong and they would talk to your parents or create some awareness among people who knew you to come talk to you but they wouldn't come themselves...I guess coz maybe they didn't want to make themselves look bad. But now joining the community forum, I've, I've done a lot of changes in it, where we go out and talk to people straight, without disrespecting them or belittling them, or creating stories around them. Instead,

we go straight to the person and tell them what it is, how it's going to damage themselves and how it will affect them so that they can make the decision to change rather than outing pressure on them from all different directions. So I've made quite a lot of changes in that direction and it seems to be working.

F: Sounds like you trying to encourage a more supportive role from the community.

A: Yes absolutely. We'd got another community forum that's joined us now so what we busy with now is sort of drug awareness. So people from rehabs will got out to school and talk to kids to create that awareness. We'll do it sort of a week-long basis, have posters all over the place, and let parents know that if they feel any of the symptoms, they can feel free to call us and we can come in to obviously help their kid. So they can see, okay my kid comes home and he's got red eyes, or he comes home and he's chewing chappies, something's wrong, and let's get someone who knows something about this who can actually assist us.

F: Okay. You said that you are trying to move the community to more of a supportive role than one that is belittling and rumour driven. Did you ever experience that?

A: Yes I did. I had a lot of rumours. I think what made me hate, I'd say that part of the community that's supposed to be helping people, was actually creating rumours. That's where the problems come in place coz you know, you tell someone one story and that it goes to the next and by the time it reaches you, it's a completely different story than what it actually was. So basically, that wasn't a good idea so now we just go direct to the person and do it straight up you know.

F: Okay.

A: You know, I had a very bad reputation. Guys would call be zolbie because I'd always be spoking. I mean, I used to love to smoke that shit, I won't lie to you. I used to spoke a lot of it through time and as I stopped I would stay away from the community. I used to meet people and they'd still call me hey zolbie and I'd say but that's not my name, this is my name, God's given me a good name you

know. I'd really appreciate it if you didn't...so it was a lot of standing up as well from my point of view and now if you say zolbie, people donno what you talking about or who you talking about. So that makes a very big difference in my life. So even after destroying my life and throwing my reputation away, and throwing the reputation of my family – who never deserved that – uhm, you could basically come back and you could fix everything.

F: It's really a reconstruction of life hey?

A: Yes [laughter]. As I said, it's a full turn over. You can't say okay, I'm gonna stop drugs but still be with the same people and I love to still go to the places that I've been. It doesn't work. So you, if you change, you gotta cut out some people, some places, some things...a lil bit of everything. And I remember when I stopped, I used to love to come here to the zoo coz this is one place where I could be free, without any influences. I would come here like two or three times a month, believe it or not coz it was a place for me to escape. So that's what I mean, I've changed from going to like nightclubs where it would smell of booze or whatever the case might be, and you change your life totally around into something totally different. Not to say that there isn't places where you can just be totally yourself without needing anything and you still have a lot of fun.

F: Okay. You've spoken about counselling and I'm wondering what role counselling has played in your own recovery?

A: You know it took a long time as I told you. One day I'm gonna die and not have an answer to say what I did for humanity, uhm...I believe we all related one way or another you know. We are come from A so, we should help each other, no matter what colour, no matter what race. Wherever you can help someone you should help them. Uhm, I also believe the little things in life is what will take me to paradise. The counselling...I remember it was a Friday when I decided I'm gonna join this community forum, and on Sunday I met this guy who kept asking me to join at a wedding, so I thought it was meant to be. So I asked him when the next meeting is and he said Wednesday, so I said I'll be there. They were more than happy to have me in...a few people from the community were like, what the hell are you doing here [laughter]. They obviously didn't know who I was coz they didn't hear about me for such a long time and I was like don't you

remember that person, and this is me today you know. And I said I believe I can help youz and guide youz because how are you gonna stop someone from taking drugs if you've never took drugs yourself? How can you stop someone from smoking weed if you've never smoked a pipe? You can't do it because you wouldn't know what that person is going through you know. And now all of them seem to quite helping and all of them seem to be moving forward. I love the counselling, it's priceless. I do it very differently to other people. I like doing it in the people's homes because there's more comfort and you get a addict who'll tell you, oh no my dad did this and this and then you ask dad and he never did anything like that you know. So when you have them all together in one place, you don't have those sorta problems because they can't lie and say that guy did that but he never actually did that coz they try to find an excuse and they quite intelligent in a way, they know how to make anyone believe their story [laughter]. Do you have to listen to two sides of the story before you can actually make a decision, and that kinda helps. You also now gotta break the friction because it's no use you helping the kid and he's tryna come off his addiction and he wants to stop, but the parents at home are not willing to break that friction and that also makes it quite difficult. So I work in the homes among all of them. Sometimes we'll talk to them on their own, sometimes we'll talk to them – and you gotta make them realise like why did the parents shout, why did they scream. The other guy was quite upset and was like I don't wanna sit here, and I was like no but, just chill a moment. Why is your dad reacting like this - put yourself in his shoes for a minute. Now think about it, he's done this, he's sent you here, he's done that, you just divorced your wife and left your one year old kid...obviously he's gonna be pissed coz he's disappointed. He cant go and shnuff a line of coke to go work on his problems. His way of dealing with it is screaming whereas you on the other hand would go bust yourself up in the room and you come back and the problem's over. So you sort of make them realise why people do what they do. You know when you actually help someone and you see the difference in their lives, you see they've also managed to turn over a new leaf, it's priceless. I swear to you, there's no better feeling in the world than that.

F: You described yourself in the past as useless. Considering everything you've just said, do you still identify with that?

A: No. It was hopeless then. Now, I've got lotsa hope [laughter]. There's lotta visions, lotta dreams. As I say, it doesn't always go the way you want it. You have your ups, you have your downs, but you just learn how to deal with it and carry on I guess.

F: Mm, I ask that because you actually sound quite useful right now in terms of your counselling work.

A: You see it's like, you get two types of people. I watched this guy in a motivational video and he says, we all like bugs you know and you get two types of bugs. One flies and it doesn't trouble anyone, it doesn't cause any problems with anyone, and there it gets knocked by a windshield. So he has an option – he can either sit there and complain about it and just not go on with life. And you get the second type of bug who also is flying and doesn't trouble anyone, doesn't hurt anyone, and gets knocked by a windshield. And all he does is he just jumps on higher. Then every now and then a truck and trailer comes by, then it's just his chance to climb on higher I guess. So you get two types of people. One will just sit and whine and groan – and that's the problem with drug users coz they stuck in the subconscious mind which creates some sort of a blockage and then it becomes very difficult for them to do stuff, and I think it would take, without Ibogaine, close to about close to six-seven-eight months before you could get someone to actually do something but in that time it's very, very difficult. Whereas Ibogaine does that for you in about six hours...it's, it's amazing. It's a bit expensive though and they wouldn't like to use it on a worldwide basis or they wouldn't make it cheaper because the world's best medication which creates the most amount of wealth is actually antidepressants and stuff like that, where with Ibogaine, even a guy with bipolar can lose his addiction overnight. It's like it takes the depression out once and he doesn't ever have to worry about taking pills every day. so even if you look at antidepressants and stuff, it's sort of making people addicts just in different ways, maybe it's not as bad as drugs drugs, but it's just drugs in another form.

Where you taking one man's addiction and just giving him another. It just, it just doesn't work.

F: Okay. So how long are you involved in the counselling?

A: A lil, uhm, it's about a year. A lil bit over a year.

F: Okay. Do you think it's played any role in your recovery?

A: You know, I think I've passed the recovery stage...I think I'm pretty much recovered. In the beginning of quitting, I'd see some form of drug or I'd smell people using and I would run. I would go as far away as possible from it because I didn't wanna do it again. Uhm, it went on like that for about a year, a year and a half, then I got stronger with time. I remember once, a friend of mine jumped in the car and he took out his joint, it was actually a family member, and I told him give it to me, let me make it for you and I threw everything out the window. He was pissed hey. I said if you are gonna do that you gotta do it in a place totally separate from me because you don't respect me, you don't respect what I'm trying to achieve in life. I guess that was by year two, year three. Ag you know, I think I've passed the recovery stage. I've chose to forget this. Now it's just the counselling which is to help other people so they can go through the recovery stage and they can recover themselves and they can help other people.

F: So you wouldn't see yourself as a recovering addict?

A: I think I've passed the recovery stage to be honest.

F: So how would you refer to yourself?

A: I'd say I'm recovered [laughter].

F: And what does that mean to or for you?

A: It means it doesn't bother me in any way anymore. I mean, you could be using and it wouldn't affect me. Recovery is a lot more than just leaving the drug. It's leaving the lifestyle that you lived. So it's gotta consist of a complete change. Change in your lifestyle, change of the places, the people...change of pretty much everything around you. You can't say I'm just gonna change the drug and I'm still gonna be with my friends and I'll leave them later. It doesn't work. If you

say okay, I'm going to change you gotta take everything you knew and you swap it over. You like this new person who starts exploring all over again. It teaches you different ways, differs choices, and you'll find different joys in life. It takes time, but you will find it. I sorta became my own person and found my own strength. Much more luck came into my life after the restart button. Also with counselling, it's not everyone who could do it coz you must remember you going to someone's house, you tryna help them, they obviously have drugs available there...you've gotta confiscate the drugs, you gotta through it away. I mean, if you not recovered yourself, you basically making a bigger whole for yourself. So it takes this amount of time where you can say this thing doesn't bother me anymore and you build that amount of strength where you actually learn to hate it. When you create that type of hate for drugs, than you can actually help the people. You don't hate the people who are using it because they are good people with bad habits. You, you learn to hate what they are doing. You love these people, but you hate what they are doing. You get that out of them and give them that opportunity that you had in life.

So ja, basically... It means a...it's basically a restart to life. So basically you get to relive your whole life again, without making the mistakes you made in the past. A mistake's not a mistake until you repeat a mistake. Change is always uncomfortable, but ja, if you want it, it will get easy. I guess that's anything that matters in life. Change has been great for me, but change has always got it's challenges because with change you gotta fall out of a comfort zone. Lot of people don't change, I guess it's coz they don't want to step out of their comfort zone. So to step out of the comfort zone means they'll always be challenges, which is good...makes life exciting. It's never smooth sailing. They'll pretty much always be obstacles. It's just about how you handle the obstacle. Change has gotta come from within. When you decide to change it becomes easier coz you have that will. Like I said, it's a lot more than just leaving the drug. It's leaving the lifestyle that you lived. So it's gotta consist of a complete change. Change in your lifestyle, change of the places, the people...change of pretty much everything around you. You can't say I'm just gonna change the drug and I'm still gonna be with my friends and I'll leave them later. It doesn't work. If you say okay, I'm going to change you gotta take everything you knew and you

swap it over. You like this new person who starts exploring all over again. It teaches you different ways, differs choices, and you'll find different joys in life. It takes time, but you will find it. I sorta became my own person and found my own strength. Much more luck came into my life after the restart button.

F: Like you said, if you don't first do this for yourself, you can't do it for the next person. What I'm hearing is that you learn to separate the person from the drug. Was that something you had to do with yourself?

A: Ja, I threw it down the toilet, I told you.

F: So you had to learn to separate yourself from the addiction?

A: Yes, definitely. You have to. It's a very important part. You gotta stay very far away from it. As I say, you gotta change everything. So when you see it, you stay very far away from it up until a point when you realise, do I wanna give back don't I wanna give back you know. It's something you gotta answer. Most of the time people who do use, most of the time will help others coz they don't want others walking the same road that they did.

F: Okay.

A: I wise man once told me, a mistake is not a mistake until you repeat a mistake. And then he told me if you really smart, you'' learn from other people's mistakes, you can't go and make your own mistakes. So one is helping these recovering addicts, and one if how do we stop the future generation making the mistake totally - how can we create that type of awareness.

F: You are quite passionate and future focused. Are there any visions you have for yourself or goals for your future?

A: Sho, that's gonna be another whole record [laughter]. I always maintain one attitude and that's...aim for the moon and if you miss it's okay, you'll still end up among the stars. Which means you'll still be a lot higher off than where you actually started. As I say you need to have a vision in life. You gotta know where you are going. I'll give you an example. I could drive from here to Cape Town which is 1200km, by only looking 200m in front of me in the night. I don't need to see the whole road. But also, I can't just go drive on any road and expect to

get there. So people need to have a vision and say, okay, you have to dream. Dreaming is very important. I have the most amazing dreams and I love to dream. You have your dream and you say I'm gonna achieve this dream coz any dream is made to become true if you really want it. I set dreams that are so high, I don't think they'll ever come true. If they had to come through I think I'd scare myself [laughter], to be honest with you, but it gives me that direction to work on, it gives the hope to go on. And then you sort of say okay, the first step for me to achieve this dream or goal is to go in this direction in life, and then you just take one step and that one step will reveal the next step for you.

F: So that's the point...taking it a step at a time.

A: A step at a time. You can never see the whole road. Just take a step at a time. Even using drugs it's sort of a bend in the road, it doesn't mean it's the end of the road. A guy can obviously find his route back onto that straight road. In life you get right and you get wrong, there's no in between. If you going right than you going straight. If you going wrong than you a bit bent and you can obviously bend anyone back.

F: I think I hear a lot of self-forgiveness that comes with that. To say that okay, I've hit my head but I don't have to stay stuck with this feeling.

A: Ja, you know what, there's hope. You gotta just go on. You can either sit and complain or you can just keep flying, it's up to you.

F: Well it's obvious what choices you've made in terms of sitting back verses flying. You know where you going.

A: Ja, I guess so yes.

F: It's just such a transformation that I'm hearing and it's inspiring. And I don't think there's many people that can move from where they were to where you are. Some people do struggle to take that journey.

A: Ja, I guess it's the idea of change. Nobody likes change. People won't even grow in life you know, not even from a drug form because they afraid if change. What happens to me if I become rich? What happens to me if I achieve? Will my family, friends and people around me still like me? When a guy gets change,

it's all these fears that come to them and they don't know how to deal with the fears so they just sit in the place where they've always been. They sort of get in the comfort zone and they don't want to get out of the comfort zone. It's a scary thing because to achieve change you gotta get out of the comfort zone, in order to have more health in the future than you had in the past, or a better future than you had in the past, or more wealth than you had in the past, or anything that you want better than what you had in the past...you gotta do things that you didn't do in the past. And that's a very uncomfortable word, but it's a very powerful word. You'll see it among all aspects of life, people don't like change.

F: What are your comfort levels with change?

A: I love change [laughter]. You know change is very important, but it's a difficult thing. I mean when I was little, growing up you'd have a normal cellphone for example but now a days you can do everything with a cellphone. If you do not change and go with things like they are supposed to, in the good ways, you'll, you'll obviously stay behind. And choice comes with that. You gotta handpick whatever you want to do in life, and the only way you can do that is to control your thoughts first. As the old saying goes, I'm sure you've heard it before – it says watch your thought for they become your words, watch your words for they become your actions, watch your actions for they become your habits, and watch your habits for they become your destiny. So if you look at it, it all pretty much comes down to the thought.

F: And having control over that.

A: Yeah.

F: A thank you for that. Uhm, is there anything else that you feel you'd like to share anything else?

A: [laughter]. You've gotta ask me if you've got more questions.

F: I think we've covered everything. Thank you for your time. I can't guarantee who does and doesn't read this, but you surely have influenced the way I see addiction and recovery and the way I'll be able to use that within my professional capacity.

A: You see thoughts are important, not only for drug users, I mean it could work on anyone's platform. We all, we all addicts in a way. Some are addicted to the cellphone, some are addicted to tv, some are addicted to food and they'll be obese you know. Some people are addicted to...whatever it might be. As I say, it all comes down to a thought. I wouldn't say it's only for addicts...actually, we all addicts so I wouldn't say it's only for drugs. No matter what you wanna change in life, you can change it all by just a matter of a thought. It's all mind over matter.

F: Thank you for that and for your time.

[End of Recording]

Interview transcript: Estelle

Transcript keys:

- *Interviewer: F (Fatima)*
- *Interviewee: E (Estelle)*

Note: Interviews have been transcribed verbatim so as to preserve the characterisation and authenticity of the participants' linguistic repertoire, and to depict the nature of the interviews.

[Start of recording]

F: So I am just using both devices to record, just as backup's obviously.

F: All right, let's complete the consent form. There that is your details, your details, your signature.

E: Surname too?

F: Yes please.

E: So it's Durban there.

F: Okay so first things first, I was so excited to talk a little about your daughter, Atiya.

- E: You see what happened there was my mother-in-law is Muslim right, so she passed away before our wedding day, but for me she was my everything. *[emotional]* So when she passed away, when I finally got my child, I named her A. So I named her after my mother-in-law in that way.
- F: You get quite emotional when you talk about her. Your mother-in-law was important to you?
- E: Ja, for me, if you read there, she took me in, she actually gave me more love than my own mother, you understand and that's the first time I learnt about how a husband and a wife should be together, because I never saw it in my own home. And when my husband used to go out drinking with his friends, I would not have to phone him and swear, because she is phoning and swearing him *[laughter]* and she used to phone his friends and say, 'this girl is in the house, if they have a divorce you all must go with them, because it's because of you they're going to break up, you're taking her husband away from her' and things like that there, and within minutes all the boys are back in my yard.
- F: Oh my goodness.
- E: Ja.
- F: So that was like, I suppose the boys were there before you came into the picture?
- E: Ja and I told him, I was the type of person that said, your friends were there before me, I was very sickly at that time because I had polycystic ovarian disease, I honestly thought I was going to die, because I used to get excruciating pains.
- F: Oh dear, that sounds painful.
- E: I'm being serious.
- F: Since you were young or when did it develop?
- E: It started when I was 21. So I told him listen your friends were there before me, your friends will be there after me, so I'm not going to stop you from being with them while you're with me, you understand? But she, she used to stop them at a certain level.

- F: Okay
- E: Ja. So it was the, that was, I wasn't that wife that would phone and scream for the husband and all that, no, it's not my personality.
- F: Well you described yourself as quite like subtle and shy and...
- E: Not so much shy, I'm an extro...
- F: ...and people always think they can walk all over you?
- E: Ja, too much. Not shy, I'm an extrovert, friendly and everything, but er... I won't hurt your feelings, and when you hurt mine, you'll never know when you hurt mine. I won't tell you.
- F: Okay what I meant by that, I meant that's how you used to describe yourself.
- E: Ja, as quiet, ja.
- F: I got the feeling that you describe yourself quite differently now?
- E: Ja. No, now I don't give a flying fuck about what anyone thinks about me, that's the truth. Now... [would you like some? Before I put my Haraami...]
- F: [No thank you, I have to consider my stomach.]
- E: [Oh.]
- F: [Before you put what?]
- E: [My Haraami on the straw.] [laughter]
- F: [Not at all, I don't mind. My mom's side ... my mom is a revert, she was a Christian.]
- E: [Oh okay.]
- F: [And she converted to Islam many years ago. So I love my Christian family too, my Ouma.]
- E: [Is it?]
- F: [Ja; so don't worry.]

- E: No, I don't eat beef and I don't eat pork, because I've got Muslim friends and Muslim, you know...
- F: And you grew up in a Muslim house.
- I: Ja but shame, that that aunty, the only thing she didn't do was eat pork, that's it. Everything else happened in the house, the drinks, the drugs and everything, but she didn't know about the drugs.
- F: Okay.
- E: Ja, she was nice. The drinks, the boys used to drink, her sons, the drugs, her sons, but pork wasn't allowed. Strictly not allowed. Her son used to come in my house and eat from my mother and them, my ex-husband ja, so I never used to eat and then he used to eat. Ja.
- F: All right so I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about what it's like, motherhood, what's that like?
- E: Motherhood? [laughter] Where can I start? The first day I gave birth, okay it took me 4 days, it took me 5 years to get the child, 4 days to give birth to the child, er...
- F: What?
- E: 4 days, for 4 days ja [laughter]. My labour pains came to 4 days before I can even give birth, and these contractions were coming in, and I knew what was contractions because everybody spoke about it, I read about it, I had DVD's about it, they tell you, you can time it, and I was timing it. And at first it was like 1 hour, 45 minutes apart from each other, right? Every 45 minutes an hour later, I'm getting this thing. Then it became closer, and you can time it, and the next 45 minutes it will come again, then the next 30 minutes it will come again, and it was happening for like a long time for that whole 4 days. I was doing housework, I stopped going work when I was getting... I was working all the way to 9 months, fully pregnant...
- F: Did you go to work ...[indistinct]
- E: Ja, ja I had to leave work when I was 4 months pregnant because I started bleeding, and my husband then started excessively drugging all this time while

I was being pregnant. So I had to go back to work when I was 6 months pregnant, and then ever since then I have been working because they say when you're in your first trimester it's very dangerous, and I was scared to lose the child. So when I went into my second trimester and I saw that I was fine, I had to go back to work. And they took me back knowing that I'm pregnant and everything because they know I'm a good worker and they know me.

F: To your same job?

E: Ja. And then I was 9 months, when I got the pain I stopped work and he wasn't working, he refused to work. I told him to become a conductor in the taxi, even collecting money, he says no I'm too tall to be a conductor. He came up with this, mainly as excuses not to work. So I had to work because we needed money, and I wasn't going to go on my mother's door asking her for money. Like I said, she's not a person you can go to. So I went to work and when I started getting the pains I stopped working and I went to the doctors, I didn't have medical aid, I couldn't afford it. So I went to the clinic, they said, no, no I went to the hospital, and then they said no... No, I went to the clinic, Unit 10 clinic I went to. They said you have an infection. I said to them but I'm telling you I'm getting labour pains, I know what labour pains is. They said, let me ask you a question, is this your second child? I said no. Then they said you don't know what labour pains is, you have an infection. I felt stupid, and I walked out and that was a weekend, so I went into the hospital, and that Monday I think it was, I can't remember when I gave birth there, which day of the month, of the week, it was. And then I went back to the hospital and that morning, oh ja it was a Thursday that I was in labour, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. Okay, Friday, I went to the clinic that night. They said 'you've got an infection so then you need to go to the hospital and get treated for the infection.' So I had a chart at the hospital. So I went, I waited that Thursday, that Friday, that Saturday, throughout getting the labour pains on and off and that Monday when I went to the clinic for an infection check-up, they checked me up and when they put your... you don't have children hey?

F: No.

E: They put you on a bed and they put their fingers in you and they check. They said, 'but Mommy you are dilating, you are not, you don't have an infection, you are in labour.' I said 'I told them in the clinic I'm in labour, they said I've got an infection.' They said 'no, you're in labour.' They prepped me and everything same time. They cut the line and all the women was fighting with me because I didn't look like I'm in labour, because I'm sitting so calm and collectively and they put me on the bed and you know, they like made me relax. And the women they said, but she's cutting line, and then [laughter] and I was telling them quiet now and I said okay you can go next, then she said, then they said 'no you can't let someone else go next, it's you who are going to see the doctor because you are in labour!' [laughter]

F: [laughter]

E: 'And you are not in labour, you wait your turn!' and then I went and saw the doctor and they put me in the ward. And shame, even though I gave birth in a government hospital, they treated me very, very nice and it was absolutely clean, very nice but my sister gave birth in a private hospital, she wanted to pay for my labour, but her baby passed away.

F: Oh I'm so sorry.

E: Out of negligence of the hospital, ja, it was a boy, his name was Musa. With the Muslims they, what's the Muslim for Musa?

F: It's Musa.

E: Musa?

F: Yip.

E: So she also had a Muslim boyfriend at that time. So she had a baby, and they were planning their wedding in June, she was already pregnant at that time, after they planning the wedding, after the date was set then she got pregnant. So when the baby passed away, I think my sister then lost it a bit, she broke off the wedding and everything.

F: That must have been difficult for her?

E: Ja, because he's Muslim and she had a caesarean to give birth. So the Muslims, once you have the baby, you bury the same day, and she says no, she can't leave the hospital, how is she going to bury her child without her being there, you know. Then she broke it off and then we had a proper funeral for the child, but after she was allowed to come out of hospital. I think it took 3 days. Three days later the baby was buried, in a graveyard behind another hospital.

F: That's so sad.

E: Ja, and her baby is one, meant to be one year older than my baby. Ja, so she is the second mother for my child, ja.

F: Okay, so she doesn't have any other...?

E: Huh-uh. She is terrified of getting married again, she's got another guy and she's terrified of having a baby. She's living with her boyfriend, but she's terrified of marriage because she – she believes that our family is cursed. My mother is a divorcee, I'm a divorcee, she was getting married and it got fucked up, you know, so she believes our family is cursed, she doesn't want to get married. She's happy the way she is. So when they force her to get married, I say listen at the end of the day, don't force someone to do something that's not going to make them happy at the end of the day. If she's happy the way she is right now, let her be and then I don't really get involved when they're having family politics and stuff but when it comes to my sister and that particular topic, I butt in and I step in and then I give my word because she's my small sister also.

F: Okay.

E: Ja.

F: How many are you?

E: Just two.

F: Okay.

E: Two ja.

F: What does your sister do?

E: She's working in accountancy. I say accountancy, she's got the job. I'm not a pen pusher kind of a girl, the call centre is more me because it's my personality. I'm Estelle, the name Estelle just depicts me. I'm telling you that's why I hate it so much. [laughter]

F: How come? Oh wait, then where does your other name come from?

E: It's the name that my mother and them supposed to name me, in the ID but I was put in as Estelle, because we were Tamil's at that time and they had to open a book to see a name and they picked the name Estelle. My sister's book name is Isabel.

F: Oh.

E: Because it starts with an I. When you're Tamil, you have to open a book, a Tamil book and see which time of the year are you born and all of that stuff ja, and then you have to have a name with that letter.

F: Oh.

E: Ja. At that time.

F: But is Estelle a name that you do go by, or do you prefer your other name?

E: Estelle. If you are my friend, it's Estelle. If you are my family it's different and if you're from my school it's my other name.

F: Okay.

E: Okay. With my baby, the very first time she was born was a joke, because my husband was next to me and I was like lmtiaaz, check if it is cockeyed, we used to call it if it's cockeyed...

F: If it's what?

E: if it's cockeyed.

F: Oh.

E: Because I have a neighbour where I stayed one eye is like this, ja, he's terribly cockeyed, so when I used to talk to him I'll do like that there and when I'm talking about him I'll do like that [laughter]. So my mother always said you know

what, you're teasing this man, he lives across, he's my father's friend, he lives across the house, when you get your child, your child's going to be cockeyed, because the sins of the parents fall on the children and my father used to tease my mother's nieces, "phuthu lips." My sister's got lips that look like that. Then he used to tease his niece, "ducky bum." I got it [laughter].

F: Oh my goodness!

E: You understand? So now I was terrified of what I created. Towards the ending days of my pregnancy, the last month of my pregnancy, I was terrified to give birth to a cockeyed child, what am I going to... I'll be guilty the rest of my life because it's because of me now, you understand? So when the child was born, I said 'check the eyes, check the eyes, check the eyes,' and then her eyes were open, and he looked at her and he said, Estelle she's not cockeyed. It's not cockeyed. Then I said what baby you got? [laughter] He said I never checked. I said let them go and check what baby we've got. Then he said it's a girl, and then that nurse is standing there and she's laughing at both of us because normally you check what sex you have, and stuff, not the eyes. And then we're telling her, I'm telling her no I would have been so guilty if I had a cockeyed child [laughter].

F: [laughter] Well that's a relief then.

E: Ja, then she wrapped the baby up and then she brought the baby to me and this little pink little baby is in front of me and she was so tiny, she was small like this.

F: Oooh...

E: Ja, with her small toes and everything. And we never left her side, that baby switching thing never happened with my child, I'm telling you. And then I was only in, there was two Indians who gave birth, I gave birth to a girl, she gave birth to a boy and the rest of them were black children; and even when the lady, when the nurse took her to go and wipe her off, he followed her, I said 'go with her, this is a public hospital this.' [laughter]. Then, ja it took me 4 years to get this child, I wasn't going to let anything happen, because I don't know if I'm even going to be able to have another one. Then er... [you can eat, you can eat.]

F: *[I know, so can you! You can leave that on, I don't mind.]*

E: And so she cleaned her up, brought her to me, and they just wiped the baby off, they wrapped her up in a clean cloth and they gave her to you me. And then they said no, he needs to go home, you need to go rest and then we went, we gave her a bath, that one nurse gave her a bath in a silver tray, and I watched it and I was watching her first bath and how she was moving and her legs and everything, I was so excited, and then when they put me on the bed and they said you can sleep now, we can take your baby. I said no I'm happy, bring her here. I'll keep her, I'll keep her. They said but why, all the other mothers don't have their babies? I said no, for my one, it took me too long to get her, I'm not letting her go now. Ja, and then they said okay because ja, and then the went away, right? Like shame, they went away. So that's as they went, I took the nana and put it in her mouth. I wanted to do that, I wanted to do that. And then she started sucking, I started crying because I didn't know she'll know, you know, because I don't know how to teach a child, because it's my first child doing something like this now you know? Then she started sucking and it's like, she just came out of the womb, you understand? Didn't know how to suck or anything, but since I put her there she was sucking on my nana and she was drinking milk, and then she stuck to me and then I was so happy, and I was just lying there and so grateful to God. And then...

F: Such a beautiful experience.

E: Ja, it is, the labour part, trust me it's not. Fucking killers! [laughter]

F: [laughter]

E: Everybody is screaming and screaming and screaming. Now me, you want to scream now but I'm not a screamer. So I had a face towel, I was biting on the face towel. When my sister and them came to visit me before I can give birth, she's giving my husband the phone to come and tape the whole thing. I said to her 'take the thing and fuck off from here!' Who wants to be taped now? I mean you're so much in pain, you want to put the thing over there. I said take it and go from me. Then my sister, Akah let me stay, Akah, but I want to tape. I said 'hey listen was I there when you was giving birth?' No. And then I saw her

face, I saw no it wasn't a nice thing to say and I said no, I said but anyway you can have her after I give birth, but please...

F: Right now you need...

E: Because she never had a – she never give birth normally, she had a caesar, everything is just numbed. I am in pain here, and I explained that part to her. She said 'oh, okay, okay.'

F: Excited?

E: Ja she was excited. Then even she, my grandparents came, everybody came to see, and then I never gave birth at that time, and I said 'just go, just go,' because they want to come and poke their fingers there and see everything, and she's saying, did you see here, did you see? I didn't even let any... even when we used to have sex it used to be in the dark, I never used to let him see my body. My body is my temple, I don't like anyone to see it, not even my own mother. The only person that ducks a peek is my baby [laughter]. My sister used to stand on the bath stool outside the bathroom window and peep through to see me, so I closed the window. Then she used to peep through the bathroom hole, the keyhole, and peep through, what's so special she's got that I don't have. So I used to put my clothes there and put tissue and cover the hole.

F: [laughter]

E: Even up till today I still have that habit of putting something and covering that hole in the door, you know the keyhole, ja, paranoia. Very paranoid person I am, very paranoid.

F: Okay. I like how you say 'your body is your temple' though.

E: Ja.

F: Now you've been a mum for... how old is...?

E: Four years. Now the only time she's an angel is when that eyes is closed and she is sleeping [laughter].

F: Is she a busybody?

- E: Very busy. She's a ...[indistinct] through and through. Through and through.
- F: Does she take after her mom?
- E: Ja I think so. I had to put her motorbike on the wardrobe today, because they are paving our yard, they are putting cement on the floors, and she's riding her motorbike through all the way down.
- F: She sounds like a little Tomboy?
- E: Mmm.
- F: You mentioned earlier, oh okay.
- E: I want to show you a picture.
- F: Okay.
- E: And er... yes... I'll show you her album. This is Atiya, all her pictures. Very photogenic, that I don't know who she takes after, I think my sister because I am not photogenic at all.
- F: She's like a model!
- E: Mmm. Ja I get a shock.
- F: Look at these, so cute, oh my goodness. She's gorgeous and she loves the photos.
- E: You can see she's with the washing stone, trying to do... they took it out because they're cementing, and she's... posing.
- F: She's ever ready for a pose?
- E: Ja.
- F: Okay.
- E: She gets her moods when she don't want the photos, but when she's in the mood I snapshot.
- F: She looks very much like you hey, I don't know what your ex-husband looks like, but she looks a lot like you.
- E: I'll show you a picture of him just now.

- F: She's beautiful and she looks like a little lady. Maybe she's just got tomboyish ways but she looks like a little lady.
- E: But if you notice this is church, hence the dress but when she's at home, it's pants. Then this is my niece, Zia, she was my first child, Zia.
- F: You said you were quite attached to...
- E: Ja. The children.
- F: To children and pets.
- E: Mmm. Zia.
- F: You remind me of my sister, she has all the pets you mention as well.
- E: And the hamsters breed every 3 months. That's why I ended up with a double story cage for them.
- F: Oh wow, okay. So you mentioned earlier that your sister is afraid of marriage and that sort of thing.
- E: Ja.
- F: What also came out from your story was er... the whole idea of wanting to have a family of your own, like this ideal family. What is an ideal family for you?
- E: For me an ideal family would be a husband and a wife that love themselves, love each other, love themselves, are kind to each other and even if there's a problem, it must happen in the bedroom and it must stay in the bedroom. If there's visitors that's coming over, they mustn't know there's a problem between a husband and wife, and the family, family must never get involved. This is my ex-husband. He's extremely tall, he's the tallest guy I've ever met up until today.
- F: They say opposites attract, right, because you're short.
- E: Ja and everywhere, when we used to go anywhere, the people used to think I'm his daughter or something, I'm a small child, because he's a giant compared to me, a complete giant. We could never stand and kiss or anything like that, never. Never, I promise you, never and the boys used to ask us, they'd say 'kiss her, let's see. Let's see how you kiss her.' Then we used to do it against the

car, I used to stretch against the car and he has to bend his legs and everything. [laughter] shame.

F: You had to make a plan.

E: Ja because they used to say he married a David and I married a giant, I married Goliath.

F: Interesting. Did they really say you married Goliath?

E: Ja, because he's tall.

F: There's other characteristics of Goliath.

E: Ja and he meets up to them.

F: Such as?

E: The evilness. He was in the bad team, David and Goliath, David conquered Goliath by that story. Don't ask me about a Bible story because I'll give you a wrong version completely. [laughter]. From what I know he was one of the guys on the bad team and David was this little child that went with his stone and his slingshot and then shot him down. So a person that is small can bring down someone that is big. It all depends on your faith. Even if you have, I don't believe in the mustard seed faith, the...

F: What's that?

E: In the Bible it says, 'God will bless you even if you have a faith as little as a mustard seed.' Now a mustard seed is that small little black seed that the ladies put in the curries and stuff.

F: Right, right.

E: I believe in the hair strand faith, my own... my own thing because I never really had faith, up till today my faith is still weak but even it can be as thin as our hair strand, as thin as a hair strand, as long as it is there and you believe in something greater than yourself, there is something there, and you can pray to Him and He will make a way for you.

F: I noticed that hair strand faith in your story, and I was quite taken aback by that, what does that mean. So that's even smaller than a mustard seed for you?

E: Ja, because the mustard seed for me, I've seen a mustard seed, it's round, it's got thickness to it, you understand? So my faith was worse than that, my faith was as thin as my hair strand. That's my faith, to put it in a nutshell. I believe in God and I believe that He gave me so much in my life, and my miracle child is my Atiya and He helped me through my drug addiction because even in the NA they tell you, believe in something greater than yourself. They don't care what you believe in and what your religion can be, it can be Islam, it can be Tamil, Hindu, Christian, whatever, as long as you believe there is something that is your creator, other than your mother and your father.

F: So belief is important in NA? And AA?

E: Both. I was going to both because my father was an alcoholic you understand? So I needed to understand, in order for me to develop myself, there's a lot of things I needed to understand also, why men do what they do, why they drink and everything. My father never told us sorry for his adultery or never told us sorry for hurting us or whatever, like but what he did do was drink and he did love us, when he is with us he did love us. So no matter how much bad things my mother told us about him, at the end of the day we still wanted our father more because our father showed us more love than our own mother, you understand? People go to where love is, it doesn't matter how, who is the person that's giving you the love, as long as you're getting the love. You understand? We chose to be with a drunkard who's an adulterer than a clean woman that is working. You understand, because there's more love coming from him than from her. Up till today I still love my father more than my mother because my mother will do things for you, but throw it in your face all the time, every time. Just the other day we had a... that night that I was sending you that thing, I was crying, I was upset. My deadline was on the 30th, I was sending to you on the 31st I think, isn't it? Because that 30th I had a horrible day. I tried to on the 30th but I had a horrible day because she was fighting with me and things, she was saying that she's taking care of me and my child, and she's feeding us and supporting us and stuff. And I got angry, I said you can pick on me as much as you want, don't pick on my child, you understand? I said not a problem, I don't need your word, I have a job. I brought this child into the world, and at the end of this month I will move out. Forget me, forget my child. And

one day, I won't be a prisoner all my life, you understand, one day when I'm rich don't come knocking on my door, because I won't know you that time because now when I need your help and my child needs a stable person, you're closing your door on us. *[emotional]* Don't waste your time, and don't tell me you love me when you're throwing words like that, because words hurt more than hiding. Rather touch me, fuck me up, I can forget the pain tomorrow, the marks will go away tomorrow, but the words will always be there, I'll *always* remember the words. That's why, because of her words, when I'm angry with anyone, I'll take a full walk and I'll go away and I'll never let you know when I'm angry with you because out of anger you can say the worst things to the person which you will regret, you know? And it's too late to say sorry because sorry means nothing when all those terrible words come out of your mouth and the relationship is broken. You're never going to get it again. My mother's relationship is gone a long time, now it's just tolerating her. Ja.

F: I was wondering if it's changed.

E: No.

F: Because I know for so long you fought to get out of living with her.

E: Ja. No, it's very hard..

F: And you kept being pulled back because of circumstances, back to her.

E: Ja, and you see, to live life on your own, it's difficult. To live life with a child, it's even worse, do you understand? Now I travel to work with a lift club. I had to find myself a lift club who is accommodating enough to drop my child in the crèche with me in the car, and pick up my child from the crèche with me in the car. You understand? It's hard, it's awful, I pay extra but not everybody was willing to do it, even with me paying extra. I pay R1200 for my transport, and other people are paying R650. You understand? So I wanted this child, I'm not just going to do anything stupid and neglect it and everything. That's not who I am, I'm not going to... and at the end of the day we're living on borrowed time, I don't know if God gave me this child on lent time, do you understand what I'm saying? So I don't want to have any regrets.

F: Your child's very important to you.

- E: Ja.
- F: Now you're such a fighter. You're so different to the way you described that woman some years ago, every time you speak about Atiya it's like this mighty person that just comes out.
- E: Ja, I would kill for that child.
- F: So what role has she played in your recovery?
- E: She [laughter], she actually made me smoke.
- F: Okay let's start there.
- E: She made me smoke, because I'll tell you why, it's not so much her, it's guilt. It's guilt that I couldn't, I brought this child into this world and then I can't give her a home, I can't give her a happy home with a mother and father, and I'm giving her exactly what I had, a broken home.
- F: What does that mean? What does it mean to come from a broken home, for you?
- E: It's hard because [laughter]...It's hard because people treat you differently. Automatically er... they kind of feel sorry for you, and they look down upon you, like you can see this child's coming from a broken home. You know? And they'll always wait for you to fuck up or stuff up something. Sorry for swearing.
- F: Knock yourself out, I don't mind.
- E: [laughter]
- F: You can swear as much as you want, okay?
- E: Okay. They'll, they'll... like I don't know, and if anything happens, even if it happened to you now, just say someone saw you with a cigarette, they'll say you see this child's gone bad, now she learnt to... you understand? That's all they'll say about you because your mother and father aren't together. Like for me now if they see me smoking, they'll say see this child, you know, her upbringing, her parents split up, see how they are. You know what I'm saying? Shame. That's not how I am.
- F: So your ideal family, it sounds like more a society expected ideal family.

E: Ja, to be honest. Not too much of bother, children also, children tease you. For my sister too, she had a hard time, because we've got no brothers, there's no man in our house when we were in school, when she was in school. There was a girl who was fighting with my sister, and I don't know for what reason, and that girl told my sister, ja that's why you've got no father, you know, spoke to her like she's a bastard child. Then my sister came home and she was crying there, crying, and she's fair, my sister is like you, fairer than me, I was fair once upon a time but I'm very involved in sports, I was. You can see that I'm not now, but I was. But er... she came home crying, and she was pink like a polony, and I said 'Issi what happened, why were you crying?' because it was me and her after school, I used to fetch her from school and I used to drop her off at school, I was always motherly.

F: I see that, nurturing.

E: Ja, so I used to drop her off at school, I was in another school altogether, because all the teachers at my school, knew when you have someone in the school, I had the school tie and everything, even the guards knew me, [laughter] I'm telling you, so I'll go in the school, and even the parents in the school, they'll say no, come back to my school. And it was in the same road, one is on that side and one is at the bottom. So I used to go to my school and after school she would wait for me with these friends, and then I'll go pick her up from there and then we will all go home together, it was like that. And I went there and she's crying. I said Issi what, and she's wiping her tears and looking at me and smiling. I said, what happened? 'No, nothing happened, I'm fine.' 'No there's something happened. No nothing happened, okay, I'm fine.' I asked my friend Shauna, I said what happened to my sister? She said no this girl was fighting with her and she gave her one slap. I said for what? She said no, your sister mistakenly bumped her in school. Coming out of the class she bumped her. That girl pushed her in the school and she said something to her, and your sister never tell us. After school the same girl came by your sister and gave your sister one slap and your sister fell on the floor. And then we picked your sister up and we, my friends wasn't fighters, and when we picked your sister up and we asked this girl what happened, she's saying 'ja this girl is so fat, she bumped me.' My sister is fat right, 'she bumped me.' And then, what's this

thing called, she's eating so much, I don't know who's house she's eating at because her father can't provide for her, no father can provide. So she might be eating in other people's houses and getting fat. I promise you, I never went home that day. I gave my friend our bags, and I found out where that girl stayed. I got so much of friends in that school, and they all knew me because of Issi, and I asked every single one of my friends who is this girl that did this to my sister. I went right up to her house, and I went to fight with her, I went to hit her. And then she was there by, she wasn't in her house, she was across – she wasn't in her house, she was across her house by one factory. And I went there, and first I knocked on the door of her house, I said 'Hi uncle where's your daughter?' And he said 'no my daughter is not here, she's across the road.' I said okay, and he saw I was with a big group of girls, and a couple of boys came with us as well, then I went there by the factory. The uncle came and I called her outside, she came out and my sister didn't want to come. I said, 'come here now.' I'm a very soft person, but don't mess with the people I love, because you've got a big problem. I only love two people in my life, that's my sister and my child, and my niece now also but then but nothing bad happened to her for that side to come out of me. And I went for this girl, and I gripped her by her shoulders and I said 'you will tell my sister sorry now.' And she said 'for what?' and she was laughing at me. She said, for what. And I said, 'for what you said. I want you to tell me what you told my blood. This is my sister. Tell me to my face what you told my sister,' and this girl was bigger than my sister, older than me. I was in Standard 8 and my sister was in Standard 6, and this girl was in Matric. I went for a Matric girl. And I'm a chicken, you understand? I'm frightened for everybody. [laughter] But I was angry now, and all of my friends are chickens, none of us are fighters, and I gripped her and she's thinner than me too, so that's how I think why I had energy. Out of anger I was so angry, and I gripped her and I just pushed her against the wall, and I said I want you... she's denying what she did to my sister, I said 'tell me to my face what you told my sister,' okay? And then she said, this is what I said. And she said, I was going to give it to her, but then I already had her, I held her and I don't know how to do it now you understand? I'm not a fighter, I don't know. Then her father came and he said, 'what's happening here?' I said, 'Uncle, I want you to ask your daughter what she told my sister.' And then I said, 'I come

from a broken home, my mother and my father are divorced, why, because my father is an alcoholic and he was an adulterous... your daughter had no right to pick on my sister, you understand? Ask your daughter what she told my sister.' And he asked her, she told him. She told him with an attitude. I didn't need to slap her, he slapped her ja and then she fell on the floor, and I picked her up. Her uncle was so hard, he hit her. I picked her up and then I said, she started crying, so to her, 'I'm sorry, by the way you must know your place. You are not putting food on my sister's table, we are. My mother is.' I used to work two jobs on week-ends and I used to also get money, spending money and stuff for both of us. I never used to ask my mother for anything for me especially, because I'm the eldest, I used to do things on my own. And then I'd give my sister money for something, you know, spending money and something. The catering was R35 a function, ja that was my first salary. And the mechanic's store was, I think R150 for a Saturday and Sunday. That was like extra money, like a lot for us at school.

F: Okay.

E: So the uncle used to like me there, Uncle Manny, because I was a hard worker, and er... so I told Uncle I said 'at the end of the day, your daughter is not putting food on my table. You are not putting food on my table. She had no right slapping my sister, pushing my sister on the floor and fighting with my sister. She's picking on someone that's not even her size, not even her age. If she wants to fight I'm here, I can give her a fight, even though I'm still smaller than her, I can give her a fight if that's what she wants. Uncle I'm not a fighter, I can't fight, but what she did was wrong and this is my family, this is all the family I have.' And he said 'no don't worry, I'll sort her.' And he was whacking her, for embarrassing him and for what she did to my sister, because he saw my sister's face, it was pink, pink, pink like a polony. She's terrified to even come out of the group with this girl, she's in the centre of the circle and then he gave it to her. And then my friends are saying, 'good, good, hit her some more uncle.' He pushed her on the floor and she was swearing and telling what happened. I said 'Okay Uncle don't hit her any more, it's okay, it's okay.' Then I said 'no she must learn, don't be a bully when you've got parents, and don't do things

to other people' and stuff like that there. So then that was that. So I've always been this way with my sister and stuff ja.

F: Okay so, so clearly you go into attack mode when it comes to the people that you love?

E: Ja, it's hard for me to love and it's hard for me to trust and stuff, because I mean all the people I've loved, you understand, my own family, my mother's sister, they shunned us out because my mother is a divorcee, they believe that you must stay in a marriage come hell or high water, but my mother...

F: So even if you're being abused, even if you're being cheated on, you stick it out? What would it mean to say I'm not going to stick it out like that, what does it mean to you?

E: A failure as a woman. That's why I started drugging because I honestly think, I told my husband on my wedding day, I said listen dear I love you with all my heart and my soul, but er... I will stick with you through thick and thin, but the day you cheat on me with another woman, I will leave you. You will make me a failure as a wife. I will leave you. and I do not want to be like my mother.

F: What does that mean, how does that leave the woman as a failure when her husband cheats and she says I'm done with this, I'm not going to sit here with this marriage?

E: Because if he cheats on me with a man I will understand, you understand? Because I don't have what a man has to satisfy him. That's why I feel as a failure as a woman, because I'm not doing something right. That's what I thought to myself. I just didn't believe in divorce. I was like my family that didn't believe in divorce. I hated my mother for years for divorcing my father, and for allowing my sister and me to be this outcast to society, this outcast in families, functions, everybody with their family functions sitting with their father and their mother, me and my sister are leaning onto my uncle. You understand? My aunty's husband. So we are very close, my uncle and I, because of my father.

F: Is this the aunty and uncle that looked after your...?

- E: No, no, no, I think I would have hung myself if that happened. This is my mother's sister, and her husband. But this aunty here used to be this shit ice-cream, fart-berry milkshake kind of a person, nothing bad can ever happen to her or her children, if it does no-one knows about it, and no they're not the type of family that you can just talk to about anything, she's more about classing, ja.
- F: Another thing I noticed, that for a long time even with Imtiaaz, you kept everything a secret, no-one should know about you, when I asked you about an ideal family, if you have issues, they must stay in the bedroom. What is so important about people not knowing that you also had to hide what was going on in your life?
- E: I didn't want my husband to be looking bad by anybody, because I had that hair strand faith that he was going to come right. I didn't want someone to look at him in a function and say look at this boy, he is a drug addict, coming right. Ja I loved this man, I didn't want him to have a bad name. Like if your husband, if something bad has to happen, then you would shield him and protect him, no matter what, come hell or high water. You won't want people to look down upon him ever, you understand? You'll always want him to be who you see him to be, who you saw him, who you fell in love with. You'll always have that thing to help him so he can become what he was, what he once was. You see? So that's what I was all about.
- F: It sounds like in your family generally people don't talk about problems ever?
- E: My mother talks about it. Our whole entire family knew everything, I think they knew even the first time they found a cigarette in our bag but with my auntie's family you will never know nothing. Other people used to come and tell us, your cousin is running wild with the boys in the school, your uncle is having an affair, but my own aunty won't confide in us. I don't know, she bottles it up. My own granny who lives in the same house as her doesn't know half of the things that happens in that house, you see?
- F: You mentioned something about judgement, being judged, does speaking out increase the risk of being judged?

E: Yes. You see me now after I've done these drugs, a part of me died, there's things that I've learnt in NA, incarceration, what's... drug institutions, incarceration and death, right? And prostitution. So er... the drugs happened, I was at a -, remember I told you about a law suit, that happened. Institution, I went to rehab already, death, I already felt dead towards everybody and a part of me died, but that soft part of me that allowed everybody in died. I don't just allow anybody in any more, that is what died. There was one more thing that I wasn't going to let happen and that was the prostitution because I always said I was the only one that never get locked up and I wasn't a prostitute. I got locked up, there's one more thing left, just one more. And I'm a person, I won't get locked up because I don't do nothing wrong, other than drugging and I was so careful when I was buying it also, so I was quite sure I wasn't ever going to get locked up until my own family got me into trouble with that whole listick story. And then so when that happened to me, I got a big reality wakeup, and then I said huh-uh, game is over. I already booked my rehab date. I was still smoking.

F: That's what I wanted to ask, smoking what?

E: Sugars.

F: Sugars is?

E: Heroin.

F: And were you smoking it?

E: Okay this is how it is, right. It's in my hand is the foil, right? And then the sugars come in little, in a straw like this here, and that big but it's a little bit, it's like half of this straw. Right? We are in town, I will definitely find you a straw and show you.

F: It's okay.

E: Definitely, definitely, it will be lying around, I will pick it up, and I will show you. And you, even you when you walk on the beach with your father or something, it's a little thin green thing, now it's green. I still keep in touch with all my smoker friends and find out what's out there and all that stuff, and talk to them and do

more research on how you can stop it and what's better for them and stuff, right? So it's like that there and it's like half and it's green. If you find anything small and long on the floor, it's about that long, it's a straw, pick it up and have a look at it, that's a straw, and keep a sample. You'll need one eventually you know for, I don't know, you can take a picture and put it there in your article or something. Ja so you open your straw, and you just drop it on your... first you burn your foil, so the foil needs to be burnt, right? Then you drop it on the straw and you have a back, I used to roll a hundred rand note because he used to smoke with a hundred rand note, I wanted to be him, my ex-husband. He used to smoke naked in the bathroom. He'd open all of his clothes and sit on the pan and he'll smoke naked. So when I first started smoking, I used to also smoke naked but not on the pan, I used to sit on the floor. And I used to put it there, he'd put it here, and then you put the money in your mouth, and then you light the foil up from the bottom, right? When you light the foil up from the bottom, the sugar is powder, it will melt. It will go like burnt sugar on the stove, melted that colour, it will end up a syrup colour. When it goes to that colour, the next form from that colour is smoke. While it's going into that colour it's turning into smoke, and you're pulling up the smoke, so you're smoking it, you see? So you're pulling it up, like this, and you're letting it go like that. You're pulling it up like this and you're letting it go like that. So it's called 'chasing the dragon,' that's what I used to do?

F: Who gave it that name?

E: I don't know, that – the way I used to smoke it is called chasing the dragon. Then there's another way, they put it on the cigarette. That's called lacing, they suck the cigarette and you roll it. That's called lacing. Then they've got another way, you put it in a zol, I don't know what that one's called, the zol one, but it's called, I don't know what it's called, but it has a name to it, there's three different things. So when you meet up with the smoke... and then you get the one that injects themselves.

F: That's the one I know about.

E: Ja that one I won't do, I am terrified of needles, in Phoenix they don't do the injections, the Indians are scared of needles.

- F: [laughter] They're scared of needles?
- E: Ja, ja.
- F: Did you ever find the dragon?
- E: No, you don't see it [laughter] I never knew what it meant, I just know...
- F: I mean metaphorically speaking, did you ever find the dragon?
- E: My dragon is in the house waiting for me, after here I'll see her! [laughter]
- F: So you live with the dragon?
- E: Her fire is being a poison throwing dragon.
- F: Oh wow! Ja so your mother, she's quite a strong person in this whole story for you?
- E: Ja. She's the main reason why I relapsed, because two weeks before my 28th birthday, she told me I'm a failure as a woman, I'm a failure as a mother because I'm living in my room, that I lived in when I was in school, I have a child, I brought my child to her, I can't even get my own place and live on my own. Things like that there, you understand? So I stayed five minutes away from the dealer's house, but I used to take a one and a half hour drug every morning, you know just to clear your mind, I used to like jogging, I was a fitness freak, I liked my fitness, so that particular morning I took a five minute walk in my jogging clothes. My main, my main just like jog... so instead of going for the jog that side of the road, around Kings I used to go. I took a five minute walk to that side, and I told him, I didn't even know what it's called, I just told him, two sugars please.
- F: What made you do that? I was interested to see that, because it was just so sudden, it just happened, in your story.
- E: I wanted to know, what was so good about this thing, it fucked up my whole life, you understand?
- F: Is that the answer you were looking for?
- E: Ja I wanted to know.

F: Because you kept saying you were looking for answers, what answers were you looking for?

E: Because I couldn't understand because I'm with the child, right, and guys are still wanting me, you understand, at work and stuff, but the one man I loved so much didn't want me, and didn't want my child. He was chasing after a drug. Now what is so good about this drug that he wants this more than me and his child? So then I went and did it, just to see what's so good about this drug, and I realised when I had my roster, that when you have your roster, that you know if you get sick, that roster is like ten times worse than sick. You're miserable, you're moody, your body is in pain, it's cramping in the back, your legs don't want to work, your nose is leaking.

F: Is that like withdrawal?

E: Ja, because it's leaving your system, it's called a roster. I wrote it there [in autobiography]

F: Ja I actually circled it because I've never heard that before. I was quite eager to hear what that means.

E: Ja, its called withdrawal, but er... normal addicts it's called a roster. But you see you won't know these, you know textbook terminology, with withdrawal symptoms. Now if you're talking to me and I'm a smoker, you're going to think this girl don't know what she's talking about, because she's reading a textbook and telling me, you understand? But now that you're learning the words, when you really become professional in your field and you're counselling someone, you will know what you're talking about and you'll be able to use the languages they are using, and you won't be lost and that person won't be lost also, so I'll help you as far as I can.

F: Thank you.

E: I'll still do my research and stuff, because I'm learning street smart, I was book smart, I knew nothing about the streets, and I'm learning. I don't know everything, I know a lot, but I'm still learning. And ja, it's like that.

F: So you were talking about, on your 28th birthday, when you just made that detour, what was going on in your mind?

E: No, it was two weeks before my 28th birthday, I said you know fuck this, being good, doing good, respecting elders, not getting, I used to smoke from school days.

F: Cigarettes?

E: Yes, but nobody knew, it was all hush-hush, girls can't smoke. I mean it's all people pleasing, you get cast, I smoke now, but now I – can I smoke?

F: Ja. What do you mean when you say girls can't smoke?

E: You see the society, the Indian society where we live and where we... where we live actually, if you're found buying cigarettes you're a bitch, if you're found smoking, no matter how girly you can make it looking you know with all that sticks you get to hold and all that, ah you still look like a bitch, so when we used to smoke, we used to smoke very discreetly, only at work. That's how it works, because at the call centre all the girls smoke, even the black girls, it's not in their culture but they do it still. And even the Muslim girls, all, all, they lift up their black thing, you know they can't smoke because of that black thing, they lift the black thing up and they'll smoke, man. That I don't like because no, you're using your holy garment, respect it. If you're going to do wrong, don't use a garment, you understand? Because who are you bluffing, you're not bluffing humans now, now you're bluffing God. If you think you're bluffing God, or you're making God's name look like a stupid. You understand? You're making other religions laugh at your religion, you understand what I'm saying? That's why I – I feel sorry for other people, because you get some nice, nice Muslims that do everything right and try to prove to the world that Muslims are not bad, they're not the world's worst thing to happen. Then you get some that just don't give a damn, they think so bad of us, let me just go do something, let me go rob a shop, let me go do this, let them know that it's me, themselves. So ja you can. Then you get some girls like me who honestly don't give a damn, so those girls are, they must be like me, they don't give a damn. So only now I realise what, you understand? Ja.

F: So you were saying you were thinking that everything is just getting a bit much, when you were taking that jog?

E: Ja, I came out the stairs, up the stairs, and I said, and I was going to go that side, so I just turned it on and I said let me go to the gully and let me do this. And see what it's about. Because this is what fucked my whole life up. I'm now living as a dog in my mother's house, hearing words every day, I just want to know about the stuff, you know. And so I went, I told the dealer this is the story, give me two sugars. He said what? You don't take sugars, when you're buying you buy two straws. So he looked at me, like, are you mad? Because I was so shy you know, I was this shy girl, going to a den. And buying things. He said isn't you Archie's wife, I said yes. Then when he said Archie's wife it clicked now, I can use him as an excuse. You understand, this is where the lies start. My ex husband, his name is Imtiaaz, but everybody knew him as Archie. No-one even knew he was Muslim here. So when he said isn't you Archie's wife, I said yes, so then why Archie is not coming to buy it? Then he gave me like a cover-up you know? I said ja no, he's very sick in the house, he's rostered, I knew what roster was now, I said he's rostered, he said I must please come and do him a favour and I must buy it. he gave it to me, he said tell Archie I say he's a poes from my side, because he's sending his wife to buy for him, and if he comes here he's going to get fucked up. So don't bring him, don't send him here. I said okay not a problem, and I was gone. He was already sitting in rehab now for over two years, because I left him like, I left rehab when I was twenty six and then I started smoking when I was twenty eight. So you know the time now that anxiety I will say, it was a build up of that irritation at home and that confusion of not knowing what he loves more than me and why, and then I burst. You know they say when you bottle, bottle everything up, it eventually erupts? That was me erupting on my birthday and my mother was that knock in my coffin, you see? So I went. I said fuck it, I am not going to be able to understand or know what happened, why it happened, if I don't do it. My mentality at that time was I want to know what was so good about this thing, I want to know what destroyed my whole...

F: What was more important than you?

E: And my child. My smoke is affecting you?

F: No, not at all.

E: You're sure?

F: Yes my husband smokes.

E: Ja and besides I feel bad to smoke next to a non-smoker. Then if your husband smokes I know you're used to it because if there's a car he's smoking, after he eats he smokes, he's smoking inside the house and stuff ja. So I went, I bought it, I came home, I smoked it. The next day I went back and I did it again. The next day he said no, no, no, you will wake that lazy ass up and you will send him. So I tell him I said look this is the story, no it's for me. He said, it's for you? What? And he called me inside of his house. No they sell in one place, his house is another place, his house is where the flats is, next door, he's got a house, he doesn't have a flat, right? His mother and everybody is there, his sisters and all is there. He said come and sit in my lounge. I went there and thinking now I'm going to catch it, because he's a big gangster now, er... and all the sisters are fighters also, but they know me and then he said, you're serious? I said ja I'm serious. And he called me Sissy, he said but Sissy why? I said listen here, you know my husband is smoking, right, I don't know what he loves more in this stuff than me, but I want to know, I want the answers, I need answers, and then only will I be able to forgive him for everything he has done, I will understand. He said, this is not a drug for you, you deserve so much more than this drug, don't even worry about it. Look at all the girls, look at the boys, ask them, you don't have to do it. Don't do it, don't do it. I said Sir, I want to do it, I want to know, I want to feel it, I want to know what it is like, then maybe I'll have my answers. And then he said I'm not serving, I said not a problem, if you don't sell me I'll go somewhere else because I want to do it. If you serve me, you'll know me, you'll be able to stop me if I'm bad. He said okay. I'm very persuasive when I want to be you know? Because I work in a call centre, I have that way. [laughter] So I used it on him, and so okay, then he sold me and I went home. I smoked it and then I went to work after that. What got me giving up the first time was, I was getting tired of waking up in the morning, having bath, going and seeing him, dressing up like I'm jogging so the neighbours won't

know what I'm going for, at this side of the road now, not that side, and all of that. Then go and see him, get my stuff, come home, because I'm sweating now, because I ran and came back home, jogged and came now, and on top of that I'm sweating because I'm getting my roster, and er... I said this is not my life. I booked myself into rehab, I phoned, I told Imtiaaz this is why I'm smoking, I want to go into rehab, don't tell my mother, he said okay, and er...

F: So you were still in contact with him?

E: I was still talking to him ja. And...

F: So just like that, you just decided I'm tired of this?

E: Ja because I wanted my answer. I kind of got my answer in a way with the roster part, because you need to have it to smoke it, but the sad thing there was I didn't fully understand it because I was working, why can't you work? I worked throughout my smoking career, ja if you can call it that, it's like a business but he never wanted to. I don't understand why these people are so lazy when they start smoking the damn thing. I used to manage myself so well, I'm telling you, nobody knew, my family, my mother got a shock of her life when she found out I was in rehab and she kicked me out of the house.

F: I heard that.

E: She phoned Imtiaaz, he told her. He always told me that no Estelle, he's gone all religious now, when I met him he had spikes, he had piercings, he had a skull thing on his hand, everything, and I told you, I walked away and all because I was scared of him.

F: Yes, yes.

E: Ja, and then I realised he had a heart, he had, he was a nice person, and so I gave him a chance. So then, and now he's gone... and he was an atheist when I met him, and when I went er... to rehab he went to his rehab where he was all holier than thou Christian now, I call him a happy clapper Christian because...

F: A what?

E: Happy clappers.

F: Happy Clappers?

E: Yes, you get because my whole family are happy clappers, they will go to church every single day if they have to, they will clap their hands, they'll sing, they'll share the big Bibles in their hand. Come out of church, they're swearing and they're fighting, and then my mother nagging, you don't have to be drinking, your liver can be clean, your lungs can be clean but your heart? That's the main thing. My liver is finished, my lungs is fucked but my heart is clean, you understand? That's the difference between me and my mother. That's the difference between my mother and my father also. His heart is nice. He wears his heart on his sleeve, I don't blame him for having the affair, because my mother wasn't giving him love, you understand? If you really dig deep into his life with my mother, you'll understand yourself.

F: So you forgave him or were you never – you never hated him?

E: I also hated him. I never spoke to my mother and my father for years. Throughout my married life I never spoke to them, only my sister. My father used to come and see him but he was also, the house is his house, my mother stole the house from him, when she divorced him. She said no she wants the house because she's got the two children with her, and then he ended up on the streets, and he's looking for a place to stay, he's resting with his brothers, he's rich, but he doesn't want to get his house. He's got trade, he's an artisan by trade, ja but he's got a good job and he earns really, really well but he doesn't want to get a house, he doesn't want to get a nice car. He bought a new car for my cousin, but he doesn't want to get himself. A brand new car, my cousin's the first owner, but he doesn't want to get himself a car because he says he's a dog. He considers himself as being a dog because he dogged us, he dogged my mother, so his pastor is coming to him now, so he's enjoying it, he's doing it, you understand? And I thought he was... I got side-tracked.

F: [laughter] We get side-tracked a lot.

E: Ja.

F: We were actually talking about how you ended up in rehab and then what did you do?

E: I got tired of jogging, and I booked myself into rehab. And when I booked myself into rehab my mother called, because Imtiaaz told my mother, and I told him, Imtiaaz because he organised me his pastor to come and fetch me with my bags, because I told my mother that I'm going to the airport, I'm going to Jo'burg to give a lecture, because I'm very good at what I do at my job, and I've even done online teaching through Skype to London.

F: That's wonderful.

E: Ja, when I was working at CCI because they wanted to send me to London to work there and I asked my one customer, how's the weather in London, my customer told me, the hottest summer I've ever had was winter in Johannesburg. I hated it in Johannesburg. I used to use my cousin's soccer socks and sleep, I used the other cousin's soccer socks and going work, I used to use double clothes all the time. My uncle used to call me Cavy, Cavy means granny, old granny. So I said I wasn't going to...and I asked the customer, I said Sir are you serious, you're sure you're not talking about Durban? He said no I'm talking about Jo'burg, the hottest summer I ever had was winter in Johannesburg. I almost died in winter, my uncle had to install heaters in the bathroom for me. I used to sleep with the heaters on.

F: Well coming from Durban I suppose that's why.

E: Ja all my life in Durban, you must know, and I was living in Johannesburg for two and a half years and I was paying the money, when I was finished school to my mother, depositing the money to her for her to take care of my sister and the house and food and stuff, because I wasn't there any more for my sister you understand? So I never went to the UK but they wanted me to train, so I said we can only do it via Skype. So I'm not willing to come up, and they asked me why and I said because this is what my client said. [laughter] And I'm a Durbanite through and through, I won't make it there. If you're going to put me on a plane and send me there, they're going to put me on the next plane out of there, so you're going to waste a whole lot of money on me. They said but accommodation is sorted, your rooms are heated up, it's fine, we've got thermal bedding, I said no I'm still going to walk in the cold, it's fine, no I refused. And they said you're killing your opportunity, I said it's fine, my happiness is better

than money. That's the line I used and they're proud of that, so they still paid me for everything, they paid in pounds that year so I made a lot of money that year.

F: So your mother thought you were lecturing in Jo'burg when you went to rehab?

E: Ja she thought I was lecturing in Johannesburg, but this training happened many years before the drugging and stuff also, I was working in the same company though. So she just now assumed that I was working there, because it's hard for me to lie to my mother, I'll be shit scared, because she's the type of person if you lie to her it will come out same time, the intimidation you know? And er... so I went. I was there for the first week, I was talking to her on my phone like normal, I'm in Jo'burg. How's the weather in Jo'burg, it's cold, things like that. My cousin he's telling me oh you're in Jo'burg, he's going to come and visit me. Oh the lies, I used to tell him, I'm saying no you can't, I'm in this group now, they don't accept visitors and stuff, what do I want to do. And eventually I said to him listen boy, I'm in rehab, don't tell anyone, because he said okay I can't. And then I think he understood, he didn't ask. My cousins, we have a tight bond you know? Better than the sisters, the sisters we only used to fight. So me and my sister, I did my best to make sure that we have a good relationship throughout and materialism and things doesn't mean much to me at all, because when I die I don't even know what I'm wearing in my hair, you understand? So long story short, he phoned and told her this is the story, she's gone to rehab and everything, and I don't think she believed him. And he told her it's under the bed, check underneath her bed. So she so coincidental, she was off this one Friday and she was cleaning my room, spring cleaning and picked up the bed and found it. Who would take off to spring clean? The timing, you're not that doff! Then she phoned the rehab and I was still paranoid with every girl that came in, one girl came in, Kia, I said hey I think my mother sent her, you know that paranoia was hitting me now. And then that girl said, that lady said no your mother didn't send me, this girl came before you but she didn't have the money. I said okay. So then eventually my mother phoned the rehab and that lady was saying that no she's not here, she's not here, and it's confidential, and my mother is saying tell me who's there, and she said no I can't tell you who's here, tell me where you are, I'll come and find you all, she

said you can't come, eventually I took the phone, she was harassing this house. Then I took the phone, I said mommy I'm in rehab, she said what the fuck are you doing in rehab, you've brought so much of disgrace to my family and to my name and you're making me look bad, when you come out of rehab there's no fucking house for you, take your things and fuck out and everything just like that. When I came out of rehab my clothes were in a bin bag outside of my house. Ja, and I picked up my clothes and I was living, I took a place and I was living in near to where the rehab is because I wanted to help the girls in rehab. The lady who was our housemaster after I got clean, it's a two week programme, my work gave me leave because they didn't want to give me leave because they didn't believe I'm a smoker. I had to take the vats, my R100, because that's what they used to do inside, because when you pull the residue it's gets stuck inside, right, I showed them that and showed them my foil, they don't believe me. The next, and I need to get this leave to go into rehab. The next day I took the straw, I showed them the straw, they said but Estelle, you're taking it to another level, now you went there and took someone's drug now from them. I said it's not someone's drug, it's *my* drug. I took the straw and I smoked the thing in the toilets on break time. I went back by them, I said listen here, I smoked this thing, this is hot still, so all these dots here, this here is a new dot, this is where I smoked it from. And I said do a drug test on me, they will find I am positive, and send me to rehab please because I don't know what else I can do to show you. If you want I can sit right here, right now and sit in front of you and smoke and show you how.

F: You were quite determined?

E: Ja because they didn't want to send me, they didn't think I was a druggie, they thought I was going to go on holiday or they just didn't, I don't know what they thought. I said I'm a druggie.

F: So you really did hide it well?

E: Ja, I'm telling you, I hid it very well. Okay I've got a picture here when I was drugging, I was thin, but other than that you won't know. I had it on Facebook and I took it and I saved it on my phone because now when I tell people my story, a smoker, they don't believe I ever smoked. They're saying you don't

look like an abused child, you don't look like you're smoking because when you're smoking sugars, you look terrible. You see? Where is this picture? Ja, and they eventually gave me leave, but my leave wasn't enough so I had to get suspended from work so I can have longer time. See here? That's me.

F: Ja you really hid it very well, it doesn't look like it.

E: That's me goofed.

F: Oh wow.

E: I'm telling you, I smoked in the morning, and there's me as well.

F: You would never say it?

E: Nobody, nobody would ever say it. And my mother too, I told you, it was a shock to everyone when I tell them I'm a smoker. It was a really, really big shock, because I still took care of myself, I still ate properly, I still had a bath, because the smokers that smoke sugar's, they don't like having a bath, I don't know why.

F: How was it different for you, how was it different?

E: Because I...I was too afraid of getting caught. I was doing it for my own personal reasons, I wasn't doing it chasing a drug, chasing the goofness, I was doing it for my own personal reasons, and er... I wanted to show the world, as I'm smoking now, I'm finding out about these girls and stuff, you understand? And how they're smoking and they're seeing themselves and they're not working and stuff, I wanted to show them listen at the end of the day I can smoke just like you, but I can work. Change your life man, if you can't give it up now then at least get a job, you understand? Support yourselves, you don't need to sell yourselves. You don't and then I... I'm telling you, I was a completely different smoker, I used to give money for the smokers, even though I'm smoking. Month end time comes, I used to give money, and my money was budgeted so well that I had my smoking money for the entire month, I didn't need to borrow, I didn't need to do anything. I had transport money, I had smoking money, I had baby's money, I had lunch money, because remember, when Imtiaaz was smoking I was working, I was paying for his transport, and

for my transport, I was paying the rent, I was buying food and I had his smoking money. So instead of giving him now, I had my own smoking money, understand? So because I handled it very well, nobody knew anything. And when I came out of the rehab, when I finally came out I was living near the rehab, right, there was one girl, Kelly, she was in the rehab and when I was going to visit her she was saying there's boys coming over. I said what do you mean, boys, this is a woman's rehab, no? She said no this lady is smoking zol in the night with the boys, and the boys are coming over. Now Kelly takes meds, medication for her brain, something is wrong upstairs, then she goes for injections and stuff, so she's a chronic patient. And when she takes her medication, I was there, she gets zonked, she sleeps throughout the whole entire day and I have to wake her up in the morning. So I was afraid that this girl is going to get raped in the night. These girls are coming in to get help, not to get raped. So I phoned, I phoned my friend Neil at that time, and I said Neil, this is the story, this is what is happening at the rehab, he said do you have proof of that, I said yes I have proof, Kelly is witnessing everything, then I told the council, I was also in the Phoenix centre community, I was one of the persons in the community. It's a forum that's in charge of the rehab, from a patient I became a member of the forum. I was also the house mother of that place, when they fired her I stepped in. And I told them at work, this is the story, my rehab is taking longer, I stepped in until they can get another person, and I interviewed that person, with a committee member. And I did the interview with her, I asked her a whole lot of questions but she was oh, she was about Christian. I am a Christian yes, but you've got people from other religions coming in, you can't make them think, hit them with the Bible and say hey, listen to the Bible. You can't do that. I can't force my religion, my God onto you, because you are coming from a completely different background altogether. You're going to not only hate my religion, you're going to also want to not get help from me, and anything I tell you, you're going to say no this woman is all one mind-set, she doesn't know what she's talking about. Then I said no I don't want this lady in charge. You will get somebody else, the best person to take here with these people are ex drug addicts, because they know what it's like to have a roster, they know what it's like to take care of these people. Then they didn't want anybody else, they wanted me now. And I'm already getting like

R6500 where I'm working, but to work here you're getting R1500 a month. I said at the end of the day I would love to do this job, but the money is not enough for my child, you understand? I can't, as much as I would love to do this, I can't do this. I can come in every time, just to see how everything is going, I can buy you all food and stuff, but my hands will be tied if I'm working, I can't do as much as I know I can do now, I can't. Because I've got limited resources now, and when I'm out I've got so much of resources, you understand? And I said I'm so sorry, I brought my child into this world not to suffer, I can't do this job. I'm not being selfish, I am being a mother. I told him that. Then he said the only option they got is that lady. I said you bring her, we will re-interview her and this time I will give her a piece of my mind. He said okay. So when it comes to people I love and things I'm really into, I'm very different hey? The first time I was quiet, I was humble. The second time I said Aunty, at the end of the day this Bible is your Bible, keep it to yourself. If a Christian comes we will give the Christian the Bible. It's fine, but you cannot hit any other religion on the head with the Bible. Then came time for, I said someone is crying and rolling on the floor, what are you going to do? She said, no I will give them medication, they can sleep. I said no that's not what you do, what medication are you going to give them, Aunty? Pain tablet. I said a pain tablet's not going to help, because they will do it for the drug. I said if you're going to give a person codeine, codeine is also a part of heroin, when that thing is withdrawing, it's just they got also. So I said first of all I said no, if they're rostering of drugs or not, I said you can't do that. I said no, if the person is rostering you will sit by that person and you will comfort that person and you will motivate that person all the way until that person is okay and tired enough to go and sleep. They have to physically withdraw, because Aunty if you're coming out of one thing, you're going to dispose them to something else. If you're going to give her a tablet, she's going to leave that drug there now, but she's going to get addicted to that tablet. Because every time that irritation is going to come, she's going to go and take that tablet. So eventually it's going to get so used to her body, she's going to end up withdrawing from that tablet itself. Any tablet it could be. Then I gave her rules and regulations, terms and conditions, and I asked her to check these women. And she said one girl came in, she asked, she said but I don't know how you girls can just go smoke a drug

like that, man! I said Aunty you can't class these girls that's coming here, these girls are coming for help, not to be judged and victimised. What you're doing is wrong. And I asked him in front of her, where did you find this lady? He said no we put our ad in the paper and she phoned us. I said oh God, is this the best you can get? Because I was frustrated with this woman now. And then er... Kelly was in the room, Kelly came out now and Kelly was in her nighties and a pants, rostering. And when you're rostering now you don't want to be irritated. I didn't roster bad the first time, because I was still mild in my system.

F: So after 3 months?

E: Ja, it was still mild in my system, Kelly's been smoking for years. The withdrawals on you when you're smoking for years is far more worse than when you're smoking for months. It's in your system, it's milder. My withdrawals was hot and cold flushes and just a little bit of irritation, like your body is irritated, that's about it. So it was easy for me to get off the first time. Now for Kelly, she had it very bad. We had to massage her hands for her, rub her body for her, I gave her my blankets and everything, she was too cold, we had to talk to her, and whatever she needed I just brought for her, you know.

F: You had someone to take care of there.

E: Ja, ja, it was Kelly. And then er... shame, she really had a hard time, and that's when I saw her, I was grateful to God that I wasn't that bad. And that's what made me want to get someone better to help these girls out. I didn't want someone twisted enough to go and get someone to rape these girls or to sell these girls off, but I didn't want this lady to take care of these girls, and judge these girls and class these girls, because even if the girls relapse they'll never want to come back. You understand?

F: Yes.

E: So I eventually got that lady, and er... I think the rehab, I left the rehab, but I used to still go and give them food, give them money, buy things and stuff.

F: What was that transition like when you ...[indistinct]

E: Two weeks I was there, it was okay.

F: It is fine? I mean afterwards now, because now you were leaving this sober person.

E: Kelly left there, ja Kelly ran away from there, and when they phoned me and told me Kelly ran away, I didn't sleep, I had sleepless nights, because I was going looking for her. She's not from Phoenix, she's from Verulam. So the committee member, Cole, I made him, I used to go for meetings, and he had meetings, she had run away from that lady, that Christian lady, and it was only Kelly that was still left there. Eventually after Kelly left there, they closed the rehab down.

F: Okay.

E: Ja, then because I said if you can't get somebody suitable enough, all the people are going to run away and I told them this woman is not nice. And then Kelly ran away, it was very difficult, my heart was breaking, because this is the place that got me clean. I came here to get help and I expected everybody else to get the same help, and then now I find out this lady is drugging in the rehab and getting guys to come in the yard, and then I find out the second person you are bringing in is a waste of time person that doesn't even have any experience at all, how is she going to help? That's what got me into helping so much with the girls who're drugging.

F: Yes.

E: And then when they closed that rehab down, I lost interest in that rehab, so I stopped everything. I was just clean, I was just going for meetings and stuff. And then my Aunty and... because I had a boyfriend named Neil... and then my Aunty and my uncle...

F: Is this Neil, because you mentioned a Neil that you had...

E: No, no, no, Neil, how I mentioned Neil was Neil, because I went to an AA meeting, right, and Tom is Neil's best friend. He's a man, he's a married man with two children, he was sharing, giving his story...

F: What was it about his story that... because it seems his story caught your attention? Was it anything in particular?

E: Alcoholic.

F: Okay.

E: And he got two children, one son, one daughter. Now when the AA members talk about their alcoholism, and how it affected their children and their stories, and when I see those men crying, I used to picture my father, he's apologising to us. And this is what my father did, sometimes when my father would go out in the night, come back in the morning, he doesn't know how he got home, and when we ask him where his money is he doesn't know. And my mother used to think he's talking lies, he honestly had this confused look on his face like this man doesn't know what the hell he's talking about, it's called a black out you know? Only when I went into AA I realised what a blackout is. The man is awake, he is driving his own vehicle, but he doesn't know anything. He's so drunk to a point where he doesn't know where he is or what he's doing or anything, he just knows his mind, the mind, the subconscious, I'm doing research on the mind the memory, the subconscious mind as well, and subconscious mind tells you this is home, so wherever you are coming from, or whoever you are, you know how to get home, you understand? So these men will drive all the way home, and they will collapse maybe in their cars or go on the bed or whatever, but ask them in the morning where you went and what you did, I don't know, I don't even know how I got here. Who brought me home, something like that, it's called a blackout. But if your brain blocks out completely as to your surroundings, that's how fucked you are, but your subconscious mind is taking you home, because that's what you're seeing every single day, morning and evening, morning and evening, programme.

F: So that's what caught your attention with this man? You needed to dig sort of deeper?

E: No. Er... after the meeting, I was standing there with Cecilia, we were smoking, and Neil approached me with another uncle, but the uncle was like hi I'm er... Roger. Like hi I'm Roger, and welcome to the meeting, it's the first time I'm seeing you, these guys are from Durban North, the Phoenix meeting with Tom was here, they came to Phoenix and then Neil found me. I didn't know he had ulterior motives, hey, he saw me and he came up to me. I thought he was a

social worker at first because he was just a very nice face, non-alcoholic. So I thought he was a social worker or some kind of a doctor, and he spoke very well. He's from Vryheid also. He's from Vryheid and he speaks like a White, you know you get this Queen's English, that's how he speaks. So when I used to speak to him, I used to enjoy it because I'm so used to speaking to the UK people, so now when this guy is talking, he's also been to London, he lived there for many, many years, 5 years he lived there, so he's got the twang, he's got the norms, he's got everything. So we had something in common with that as well. And a very well educated person so I got along with him very, very well. And he told me that he's got a whole lot of literature, and I was very interested in the AA and the NA, he's got a whole lot of literature and stuff so...

F: So the NA and the AA, he's joined?

E: No, he's an alcoholic, he's dual.

F: You were also at the AA.

E: I wasn't an alcoholic, I was a drug addict. But because this Phoenix Community Centre, the committee members were all alcoholics that opened up this. They only had access to our AA meetings, right? I was the... we were the druggies that were going there. So they didn't have a lot of NA girls coming in and talking to us, and any meetings near us. There was only one in Cowies Hill so even that one I had to do research and find it you know.

F: So all you girls who stayed there ...[indistinct]

E: Yes, yes, so you just go there and you tell them who you are, you need to say hi I am so and I'm an addict, it's acknowledging who you are. Firstly you need to know you're an addict before you can do anything else. Some people are still in denial. Now I honestly believe that yes, I have the trends of being an addict, because I've always ... you must go to our meeting in October, find it, go on our website, www.na.org or na.co.za and you'll find out, they've got a roster there for places near to you and just go in and just listen, you can say you're a visitor. They won't say anything.

F: I'll find out.

E: Yes, or just say you're an addict. The best thing you can do is, do the whole process yourself, and use my experience and say this is what you was doing, you can look like an addict, so it's fine. No I'm serious, don't do it as a psychologist you understand? Do it like an addict and you'll see the love that people will show to you, then you'll also see the type of people that you get. You'll get some guys that will come onto you because you are weak and you are vulnerable. That is what happened to me and I wasn't aware of this because this was my first experience in NA.

F: Is that how you experienced your relationship with Neil?

E: Ja, it was never supposed to happen, because according to NA you're not supposed to date for the first year. You see? He's in the NA for about five and a half years, so he's supposed to know better and I was really hurt by everything, I even relapsed. Yes when my aunty and my uncle wanted to take my child, when my mother kicked me out the house, right, I was living in, near where I used to work, where the rehab was. When the rehab closed I moved to Durban North to also be closer to Neil, right, and then the meetings there in Durban North as well, in Glenwood Park. So er... I used to go every weekend and see my baby and I used to come back home, because I didn't have a bed, I didn't have settees and all that at that time. So I bought my settees from Tom, and then I got settees. Now I'm not going to bring my child to make her sleep on the settee with me, that's wrong... so I used to go there every weekend you know, and spend the weekends there, and they used to bring me and come home, so I was so taken aback when they said I abandoned my child and they don't know where the mother is, when this weekend that went past, I was there with my child and you brought me home. You understand? So why do that to me, I never caused you no harm, and plus I'm paying you to keep my child, and I'm clean you understand? You know you see how people take advantage of your situation. They told on their chart that Imtiaaz is a drug addict, and he's still clean, now he's in charge of the rehab, you understand? So they told in the chart that, they told the doctor that the child's mother ran away, they abandoned the child, we don't know where she is, and the father he is in rehab somewhere, we don't know which rehab, we just know he's in rehab, but they know which rehab he's in, they know exactly where I stay, you understand? So for me that

was the worst hurt ever. That was the worst hurt ever. My mother told me about it. And I went to the... I didn't believe her, and I went to the hospital - and she told my mother what she did. I went to the hospital myself. I went there under false pretences; I said I need Atiya's chart please because she's not well. I took the chart, I read the pages. I told my mother this is the story and you're right, I spoke to my mother after so many... after the whole incident of her chasing me from the house and everything, I saw her and I told her this is the story and I will go there on the one condition. If she agrees and she says and she admits that this is what she did, baby stays there, because she understands she did wrong, she repented. But if she says she did not do it, I will take the child away. You see how gullible I still was, I was still willing to let my child stay with you because you told me the truth, you understand? I won't do that now. I'm completely different, now I won't.

F: You describe yourself as a 'tube-lighty type.' What does that mean?

E: Tube-lighty type is, it's a slang, where if you're speaking to a normal person, right, you're normal, but you're not street smart you see, you're book smart. So it means a person who will bend over backwards to help anyone, you see? It's like if you tell me get me a glass of water, but you are right by the tap, I'll do it for you, it's like that there. Or you'll tell me and I know you've got R100, but I'll still give you. It's like that. I'm not that tube-lighty any more.

F: If you don't describe yourself like that now, then what would you call yourself now?

E: A heartless bitch.

F: A heartless bitch?

E: Yes. [laughter]

F: Okay and how would you describe this heartless bitch?

E: It's a person that will take shit from no-one. I will look at you, I will hear your story, and if I decide that you're not worth being my friend, I won't befriend you. I've got, my friendship circle is extremely small, I don't trust everyone and anyone with my secrets and my stories, er... and I don't believe that everyone

out there is there to help someone. I believe there's a lot of people that will open their ear and listen to your story, only because they want to feel better about themselves and their lives. So I'm not one to judge, and I honestly don't give a flying fuck about anyone and what they think about me anymore, because no-one has been in my shoes, and if you, not you personally, but if someone has to take a step in my shoes, they will never make it this far. They would have either been still druggies, or killed themselves a long time ago.

F: So that means that you're made stronger, hardship has made you stronger?

E: Ja, ja, that could explain why I'm still single, because I do not believe in love. I do believe it exists other than a mother and a child loving each other because nowadays, me and baby – they're just there looking for another mommy, because their mother has gone old, you know?

F: So is that what you had to do, you were his mother?

E: Ja, I was mothering him, eventually I stopped loving him and we stopped sleeping together and I was just mothering all the way. So I'm not lying, the walk away from my husband was very difficult, it still is. I don't have Valentine's days, I don't celebrate anniversaries, because I don't have any, my Valentine's day is me and my child, I buy her a gift and stuff, that's how it is.

E: Ja, it's like I know what I'm doing, stay where you are, because I don't want to date you. And you get these guys that are so sweet, and they fucking come and they want to date me and I say huh-uh, go to your house now. That's how it is.

F: You're okay with it?

E: I'm okay with it, I don't want love. I got this one guy, he's really, really nice, he's very sweet, and my baby loves him, I dated him, er... from December last year all the way till February. Before my birthday I broke up with him. Ja, before my birthday because he wanted marriage and all of that, I'm not into... I went to his house and everything, but er... I've been down that road, I don't want to be someone's slave, I don't want to be submissive to anyone, I am happy just depending for one person and that's my child, and that's how it is. I don't want to grow old with a man.

- F: Do you think that all relationships will be like the ones you had?
- E: I'm not quite sure, but I'm not willing to put my sobriety down that test again because when I broke up with Neil, why I broke up with Neil, because when my aunty did what she did to me, he said you know what Estelle, maybe it's meant to be.
- F: Not having your child?
- E: Ja, and in the NA book, AA book it says surrender to men. And he used that line on me, he said 'Estelle, surrender to men.' I said I don't think you're taking that thing to the right context in my life, because I will not surrender my child to anything, you understand? I said I never bring this child so many years, so many years of praying, so many years of fasting, so many years of dedication and hoping and praying and having faith in God to get this child, and then all of a sudden losing her in the flick of an eye blink. Never! And then he says but Estelle what else are you going to do? And then he says, and then I'm trying to show him, and I stole her chart, and I went to the meeting, and I took my child out, and I went to the meeting and when I took my child out I went and stayed by my mother, I told the Aunty you know Aunty, I was renting, I said this is the story, this is everything that happened, she never even knew I was a drug addict, and then she said, I this is the story, I'm going back to my child because this is really what happened, and er... please I'll pay you for this month, I'll pay you for next month, but I can't stay any more, you can find in this next month and this month find somebody else to come move in, this is the money. And she said okay, and she was okay about it. And then I went back to my mother and I promise you the biggest mistake I ever made was going back to my mother, I should have just brought my child to my house. And the very next day, after bringing my child home today, tomorrow morning I'm in the gulley, you understand?
- F: What happened there?
- E: My sweet genie flicked and the hurt and the betrayal was too much.
- F: Was this Neil?

E: No, he didn't even know exactly what was happening now, the hurt and the betrayal was too much. There was only one I pulled that day, only one straw. So I just needed...

F: So you took the child from your aunty?

E: From my Aunty ja, because my child was with her from the time she was like 9 months, she grew my child up, I sent my child to you because you are a mother and he is like a father, she is going to know now to have a proper home with you all. I never expected her in a million years to do this to me, I did you nothing, why do you steal my child, you know what a hard time I had to get her. I was finished. So when I used to smoke the sugars, I shouldn't feel emotion, I used to be emotionless and I wanted that feeling back again. I wanted emotionless, that deadness back ja. So that's why I went back to it. And so I went to him, and I'm taking off my page, and I've still got others straws, it's still in my bag, I never tell him I smoked, then I took out the page to say Neil there's evidence to say... he never believed me, when I told him what my aunty did, he never believed me, because my aunty was such a nice person. My uncle was such a nice person. I was shocked when this happened. You know that's why I needed to go and get proof for myself. I mean I saw the proof, I needed to keep it with me to remind me that this is really what happened, this is black and white, this is really, really what happened. You know, like a slap in the face to say wake up, you stupid idiot, you know? And I took out the things in my bag to show him. He said I don't want to see it, I just don't want to see it, I told you to leave it alone, I told you let it be, I told you leave your child, and you never listened. I said you know this is my child, so what are you saying now, you're not talking to me because I choose my child over you and what you said? He said ja, kind of. I said you know what, I don't need this in my life and then I walked away. I handled the meeting – we did this outside, I handled the meeting, I did everything in the meeting well, I went to the toilet just after we had the talk, I lit my thing up and I smoked it in the toilet and I came out. It doesn't give off a smell. It doesn't give off smoke, it's not that zol one, I can do it right here in the toilets, you wouldn't know nothing. Nothing, nothing, nothing you wouldn't know but all you would know is signs, the sign is here. Here where it goes inside, when I'm smoking, I'll show you, my face will automatically go

down. For me to go, I'll show you. that's when I looked at my face in the mirror and I said no, that's how I look when I'm super goofed and stuff, but even if I limit my smoking, that face just automatically...I can't explain it, I'll have to show you. That face automatically comes down, that sadness and that smile, oh here's it here, you'll understand it now, there's no smile in me, because I'm emotionless, you must remember that. See here. Okay where's this, okay here, you see it's like down, you can see it?

F: Oh yes.

E: It's like down.

F: Yes, yes, I see that.

E: And it won't come, it won't come right, no matter how much I try. See here too, it's like down. You can see it?

F: I get that. And that's after?

E: After smoking ja. After I smoke. I don't know, that part of me I couldn't control, but nobody knew it, I only knew it because I know my face. Here, you see, it's like that there, but now maybe I'm crying so maybe that's why it's gone in but I'm clean, I'm clean. Trust me I'm clean.

F: I trust you.

E: And then you won't even find a tear on me if I smoke, never. I can say the worst thing about my life and what has happened to me, and I won't shed a tear. That's what I liked about this drug, that's why I went back to this drug after this happened because I didn't like the person that was sitting in the bed crying after being hurt again. I hated it with a passion, and I wanted to be this strong-ass person, because with my mother you have to be strong, it's like take it with a pinch of salt thing, you can't. It's like that there, it's like military all the way. And so that was that.

F: Was she expecting you to be...?

E: Yes, and if I can be a single parent, so can you. But what she fails to realise is, she's got a house. I don't have a house. She took my father's house, you understand? And now for me it's hard to get a house. It's not that easy, and

that's what she feels, you're earning so well and why can't you do this, but it's not that easy at all, you have to have so much money, and I don't have that amount of money. And I'm working at a call centre, which bank in their right mind is going to give a call centre agent a loan to buy a house, you understand, because a call centre, everybody know, you're not stable. If you're not functioning and you can't make sales, you're unproductive, you will lose your job. That is how it is in a call centre, so ja that's about it. And I went back and I went and smoked in the toilet. I came out, it was Surianne's birthday already. Now in NA, if you turn a year clean it's your birthday, they consider it your birthday, because it's a year, how many years you've been clean since you've been reborn, right? Some of them believe it's like a whole new religion, but I don't believe that. They take that NA and AA programme like it's a religious thing, some of them. They still believe in the power greater and stuff like that, but they overdo it sometimes.

F: They're reborn then it's the NA?

E: And the AA, so it's like your birthday, it's like an anniversary, things like that, we buy a cake and all, things like that. So ja it's like a celebration. But then I would say it's a celebration, you understand? I'm celebrating my sobriety. I wouldn't necessarily call it a birthday, because I'm not born again. You understand that? So I went to this thing, but I had my own beliefs, that time, I wasn't gullible any more to just go with the flow, and if you tell me the sky is orange I will believe you because I'm naïve, no.

F: You weren't a tube lighty.

E: Ja I wasn't, I was developing now. And then we had the argument outside, I went to the toilet, I smoked my thing, I went inside, normal, not a tear in my eye, nothing. Finished the meeting, spoke to Tom, spoke to all the uncles that was around, all things well, so I was the girl there so I was cutting the cake and giving the guys, and all, joking with them and whatever, whatever, and then after that, I went home and I promise you, I was full force. I lost a man that I was really, really in love with, after my husband the first guy, and my family knew about him, the second guy I brought home now, and they knew about him, and again it never worked out, so who's the failure, I have to be a failure

as a woman, that's one mess up. The other mess up is I couldn't provide for my child a mother and a father, I gave her to someone to keep for me, as a mother and father, as a day care, as a home that I know that is safe and no-one is going to interfere within a sexual way, that I trusted you with her life that I brought into this world, and for you to do that to me, there was so many things going through my mind at that time, so many, and I broke. And they tell you in AA and in NA that you need to stay away from people, places and things that will take you back. But little did I realise that I was so vulnerable that anything can take me back, you know? And I did not know about the whole relationship thing, you're not supposed to have a relationship for 1 year because you're still vulnerable. He knew, I didn't know, you understand? And we didn't just have a kissing relationship, we had a sexual relationship, even more, so I was stuck with the second mess-up. So oh God, I was finished and I carried on, my drugging from that place there, was a hectic story altogether. The first time was a starter, and I used to smoke alone. When I relapsed, I wanted to be a full blown smoker and when they say in NA, there are certain things I believe in NA, because I witnessed the first time, you pick up where you left off and you end up ten times worse. I believe in that saying. Because when I left, when I first started it was one straw a day. When I left, when I got clean it was two straws. So when I started, I automatically started on two straws and then I ended up to three straws, and then to four straws.

F: It gained?

E: Ja, because your body gets used to it now, it wants it. So instead of having half in the morning, half in the night, you use one in the morning and one in the night and half during the day, in the day, a little bit here, a little bit there, and some there, you understand, just to get you going. It was becoming a costly affair. So eventually in the second time now I used to buy from two places, I used to buy from Boet, where he knows, he's controlling me and then I'm getting greedy now, I used to buy from Barnyard. That side there, and then Boet I was taking account from him, comes last week of the month, sometimes second last week of the month, I'm buying on account, come last day of the month when I'm getting paid, I'm paying for my account. That's how it was, you see? So I wasn't that type that would go and steal and go and pawn things, and no, no, no. I

wanted to smoke this thing, but I didn't want any, I mean a bad name, you understand? I still want to hold my head up high and talk to an addict, you know? I don't want to be just like you in every sense of the word, I want to be able to fit with you, but not be classed like you. If you go, if ever you come across in your studies, this year, next year, the year later, and if you find someone that went to Barnyard and so on, ask them if they know Estelle, I had blonde hair that time, they'll tell you stories about me, I was the only girl that would come there clean, neat.

F: Barnyard?

E: Barnyard, it's in Phoenix, it's a gulley, it's a place where you go and buy drugs.

F: Okay.

E: Ja, there was one girl I knew, her name... I forgot her name, er... she's more slim, it honestly, honestly slipped, her name slipped my mind, I was talking about her yesterday.

F: That's okay.

E: She... she was very, very bad and I used to talk to her all the time, and I used to give her money and stuff, and she was a prostitute, and even when I got locked up, she was already locked up there before me. and when the police lady said, give her a police welcome, she knew all... it says there, give her a police welcome, this girl said no don't worry, we will, but when I went inside they said no, this girl we can't do this to her, because we know her. She ...[indistinct] for us, you understand?

F: You're saying even though you were an addict doing it with them, you still had to be different, you...?

E: To show them that there is a better life out there, and I can.

F: So how were you different?

E: Because I was working, I can go home and have a bath, I used to dress up nice, my clothes was always ironed and I used to still use my name, still use my jewellery, showing them that you know, that you can, if you're doing it, fair

enough, do it, it's hard to come out of it, I'm still doing it with you, you understand?

F: Ja.

E: I'm struggling the same struggle as you are, but I'm handling it so much so that nobody around... Ja and then you can live a better life and you can still be a good person, you can still do charity work, even though your money is limited, you understand? My money was limited, because I'm giving people, on top of my smoking money I'm giving you, you understand? But there's still other means, if you've got a good name you can get an account from a dealer. You understand? But if I go there just like a hobo will he give me? He'll never give me, no matter if I come ten times a day.

F: So to you was having a good name more important to you, having a good record with your dealer, or for yourself?

E: For myself. It's because I want to, I always want to, you see, even though I relapsed, even though I fell down, I wanted to get clean eventually when I was ready to, and I wanted to help these people. So even though I was smoking I used to take my goofed friends, my friends I just smoked with, for an NA meeting on a Saturday, 2 o' clock or 3 o' clock.

F: Were you still going there while you were smoking? Just to clarify, what made you still attend the meeting then?

E: I wanted to see who would love me, and they say they love us, in NA and AA. I stopped the AA meetings, I wanted to see who got that love to take me and put me in a rehab or give me the money to go into the rehab. Don't tell me you love me and you care for me and I'm worried about you if you're not willing to do something about it. That is what I was about, I loved my ex husband, I did everything in my power, not only in words, I did in action, so my whole theory was, I'm coming to you, you can see I'm goofed, don't tell me stop it, I've been there, when you're not going to do anything about it. Do something about it.

F: So when you're going to the rehab, one for the love, but also because they...

E: I wanted to see if they were real.

F: You wanted someone to do it for you?

E: No, no, I wasn't going to let someone do it, I wasn't ready, number 1, I just wanted to see if someone was willing to take the first step. That was all. That was all.

F: And then that need for loving and belonging was a constant thing for you?

E: Constant. Constant. It was always there. After I started smoking, I wanted to prove people wrong. Don't tell me you care for me when I can prove to you, you can't and you don't. Don't tell me you love me when I can prove to you, you don't. My mother knew I was drugging the second time when I relapsed.

F: What did she say?

E: She kept on assuming, you can't just assume, you must be knowing, you understand? She'll say but you're not eating, I stopped eating, a lot, I went very thin also, so the red dress is when I was fully blown and the orange dress when I was starting. You saw the difference in body, you see? So I was still slim, this is my normal shape when I'm not smoking. When I was starting off it was the orange, when I was full-blown it was the red dress. And I kept those photos as remembrance. Remembrance.

F: Remembrance of?

E: Who I was and how I looked. So if I tell someone I was a smoker but I still looked fine, why are you like this now, why are you neglecting yourself? Can this drug mean more to you than your appearance? Where's your self love, you understand? Don't feed the greed inside, you understand what I'm saying? Don't give people a reason to talk about you behind your back. Nobody is doing nothing for you, so nobody has the right to talk about you. That's one, but at the end of the day don't give someone a reason to talk about you. You understand? Because sometimes you're a good person, you're doing a lot of good, but you fall in a trap. My experience doesn't only affect the smoker, it affects normal people as well. Why? Because people sometimes feel that if they're good they'll get good things coming to them. No. Your sub-conscious mind will tell you exactly what you're being told all the time, you understand? If I tell you you're useless, you're useless, you can't make it, your family can't

make it, your mother and your father's money ran out, you can't study any more, you can't study anymore because you're challenged. Then you're going to, what are you going to do, what are you going to do, you're going to be sitting on your backside on your bed in your room and crying and saying I can't make it, there's no money, I can't make it, I can't study, I'm going to be a failure, you will be a failure, you won't be able to study because you can't afford it. But if you tell yourself, and you get somebody to come and tell you see here, your mother and your father lost their jobs, there's no more money, you lost your job, there's no more money, but it's fine, you still have what little education you do have, you have the experience, get a job, any job, and you can still contribute towards your studies, you can still do it, have faith in yourself, don't worry about your parents, they will make ends meet, you're working, help them at home in the house, don't stress, even if you eat butter bread every day and sleep, as long as your family is happy, you understand? And keep on with your studies, don't worry about clothes, don't worry about the food and what you will eat, as long as the water and lights are paid, you've all got something to eat for the night, you concentrate on yourself my angel, you'll be able to be that success that you want to be one day, and I promise you you'll do it. But if people keep coming and saying you look like a beggar, you dress like a beggar, you're a smoker, you won't make it, you're never going to make it, because it's programmed in your mind already, negativity. But if you feed yourself positive attitude, positive mindset, positive being, you will be a positive person and you can come out of any situation. That is how I am. I've always been that way and I will always continue to be that way. And this is what I tell my child. My child will come and tell me, mommy I can't draw, I just tell her, square and triangle, but she can draw a circle perfect. I said baby you can't, don't ever, you are a Singh, you came out of mommy, don't you dare tell me you can't. You tell mommy, mommy teach me how to draw a triangle because I'm not good at it right now, I will do that. Don't you dare use that word I can't, Atiya, don't you dare. She says okay I'm sorry, mommy please teach me how to draw a triangle. And I'll teach her. I'm trying to instil positive mind-set in her, from now so when she grows she's going to have that I can do anything. I can do anything. If I can go on the roof, I've been doing boy things all my life, these people tell me I can't. I've been doing things to prove you wrong all my life.

F: Even starting with drugs?

E: Ja.

F: Because it sounds to me like you're over-amplifying... "don't tell me I can't do something."

E: Ja, it's that there.

F: And how did that don't tell me I can't do something, how did that influence you when you said you finally got clean?

E: My child's birthday. Her birthday was coming up in August 2nd, and I wanted to book in rehab before that. Because I said I spent one year in birthday, her birthday, the year before I was in a rehab for her birthday, I went and saw her the night after her birthday, you understand? I came out of rehab that night on a pass to come and see my child, you see that's why they trusted me to send me out with not smoking, you understand? To see my child, and then after all the visitors left I saw my baby, after the party they sent me pictures and everything. And I told them my problem. That is why now I won't tell anybody my problem, because they use it against you. If my family didn't know I went to rehab, my child wouldn't have, I never had that problem with them, you understand? So that's why I told you in the beginning I don't trust anyone anymore with any of my stories because people listen to your story to feel better about themselves. And now my life is only focussed on me, myself and I, what makes me happy, what makes my child happy and what is good for her and what is going to benefit her. Nobody can point a finger at her because of me. I fucked up, I drugged, it was my path to follow to be the person I am today. I am honestly grateful I drugged, because if I hadn't drugged I would never have been this strong person, I would have still been walked upon all my life. Now my mother can still, she's still got a loophole over me because I'm living under her roof. But she can't really dictate to me as much as she did that time, because now I give it to her as good as I get. That's how I eventually tell her I will take my child and walk, because I can support both of us.

F: Did you feel that your experience of addictions...[indistinct]

E: Yes, and er... I am proud to say I was in rehab. I go anywhere and my cousins ask me, so you was in rehab, I say yes. My mom says don't talk about it, I say why? Nobody helped me in rehab, none of my family helped me, not even you. I went, I smoked myself with my own money, I went and got myself clean with my own money, I did it on my own. I am proud of it. I am proud to be an addict, and I'm not ashamed of it, because I never go sell my arse on the road to go make that money to smoke. I never go...[indistinct] my child, I never have a bastard child from some other man, I don't know who the father is, you understand? There's a lot of things that I could be proud of but there's also a lot of things I could be ashamed of, as well. Like going and actually doing the drug, with regards to my family pointing a finger at my child. Her friends will never know, her family that comes into her life will never know that part of me. Because I won't tell her to tell them, you understand? She won't really know the bad things I did. I can say my child doesn't know that her mommy and daddy are drug addicts. She knows daddy is in the rehab working and helping the sick. I'm not the type of person that will make her father look evil in her eyes, so I look like an angel, no. If I put my baby here today and ask her Atiya who do you love more, mommy or daddy, she'll say both of you, same, same. I got jealous the first time but I was happy, you see, because that's how we were. I told Imtiaaz at the end of the day, we both are not perfect parents, we both are not the best people in this world, but we will do our best to make sure this child is good, this child is happy. My ex-husband, he only pays R500 a month for her crèche. Her crèche is not R500, her crèche is R950, plus I'm paying for her transport, plus I'm buying her lunch things, you understand? And he won't give any more, because he's still stubborn, but he's a Christian. You understand what I'm saying? So why say you're a Christian, why say you're holier than thou when you don't have the fucking heart? I don't go to church because I do not believe that you should carry a Bible to church every single Sunday for the people to know you are holy. No, I believe that when you die, God knows you are ready. At church, you don't need to please anybody in the church, you don't have to please the Pastor, you don't have to please anybody. The person you please the most is God, and the ones that you love the most in your life. If you can show them love and if you can give your love to everybody else, who gives a fuck if your lungs is damaged and your kidneys are damaged,

or your brain is damaged for most people in most cases? As long as you've got that good heart for humankind and for animals and for things that God created onto this earth, give a hell to what people think about you and who you are and how you became this way. So that's me to be honest, ja.

F: It doesn't sound heartless at all. You described yourself as a heartless bitch and it doesn't. Would you still describe yourself in that way?

E: Ja. Why I say that is because I'm no longer this person who worried about er... hurting your feelings. Say for example you do something wrong or you tell her off because she's poor, then I will come up to you and I will speak to you up in front of that person, because what you did was wrong, and I will apologise to that person. I will make you apologise to that person, because the tables can be turned. One day that person might be feeding you water on the side of the street. This happened to me last week Sunday. I was in Debonair's, I was in the Plaza, I went to do my hair and my nails, and baby phoned me, my mother phoned me actually, she wanted a list of things, so I bought them and then baby took the phone and she said mommy I want pizza, I said okay angel I will buy pizza for you. I went to buy pizza. This guy came, smoker boy, came to me and said I'm selling DVD's. I said not a problem, my head was down, I never see his face, my head was down. And I asked him if he got cartoons. He said yes they got cartoons and they got nice action movies. Then I picked my head up to look at this guy, he is one of the friends I used to smoke with! And I looked at him and I got the shock of my life. I said boy, what happened to you? because we were all nicely dressed at that time. What happened, you had a job, he was like God, you know this drug. I said ja I know this drug, I've been using this drug. But you? He said ja, I lost my job. I said not a problem, but see here, I'm buying pizza for my baby, I'll buy a pizza for you too, right? Sit here and eat. I bought the pizza for him and I asked him whatever cool drink he wants, he must pick the cool drink, he was so happy and we were sitting outside Debonairs, like here, and waiting for the order. Another guy goes upstairs to the bar and gets caught for loitering. He then comes down with the security guard and says to the security guard, why is this guy sitting here, he's also a beggar just like me, he's selling DVD's. I said boy, keep quiet, just sit here. You know that poor child, he's sitting there quietly already. I walked up

and said, excuse me, what do you know about this guy? He says yes he's a beggar and he's selling DVD's. I said where can you see DVD's here? Can you see an exchange of money that is going on right here, right now, show me? He said maybe it's in his bag. I said, maybe it's in his bag? But is it on the table? He said no. I said then what proof do you have? If you got caught because you were stupid, you was doing something wrong, why are you getting this innocent man into trouble, for what? And then he started taking off at me, saying you don't know what you're talking about. I said I know what I'm talking about, I'm coming from where he's coming from, I'm coming from where you're coming from, so don't you tell me I don't know what I am talking about, and the security guard left us, he eventually got frightened, right. [laughter] Then in the end this dude started talking silly, he said tell this Aunty to stop it now, stop it now. Then he said stop it, I know this fella, then I said even though you know him, what he did was wrong. If he got caught he mustn't spite another person. I said let me tell you something, he's a customer, he's buying a pizza from here. He said 'for true boy?' He said 'ja.' This guy here now was also buying a pizza from Debonairs, he was also buying a pizza for his family, for his children, also poor, doing the same kind of a job this one was doing, but he was upstairs loitering, selling DVD's upstairs, and he got caught upstairs. So when he was walking past he got this guy into trouble, because they get locked up, he got this guy in trouble. So I got angry. You got caught because you are stupid, why are you getting this man into trouble, you understand?

F: The protector.

E: Ja, and this is my friend too and then er... then he said I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I said you'd better be sorry, and don't tell me sorry, tell him sorry. He said 'I'm sorry' and then he started standing there. And then...

F: You see what I mean, I don't see where the 'heartless' comes in.

E: No, I'm just saying.

F: There's a lot of heart, and I think that for me is you say that you don't believe in love and yet every action that you speak of is showing so much love.

E: Ja but, ja, okay human love yes but I don't believe in *me* finding the right person and *me* settling down, because I honestly believe anyone who asks me why I'm still single, I say my 'Mr Right got knocked by a bus driving his bicycle to come and find me, he didn't have Garmin that time.' [laughter] and they laugh. There's a lot of guys that are very nice, very sincere, that will want to take care of a woman with a child, but I don't trust. At least now I have a child from a man, another man, are you really going to tell me you're going to love me *and* my child? And what happens when you have your own child, because you'll want one, because you don't have one, and then are you going to love my child just the same? You're not. Maybe you will, maybe you won't, I'm not going to take that chance because *she* was the child I was praying for all my life. Not so much yours, but *she* was the one I was praying for. I'm not going to let another man come in my life and make me choose between first child and second child. You see I will have to love the both children together but I don't want to have specials, I don't want to have favourites, she will always be my favourite, do you understand? But it would be wrong of me to do that.

F: Yes.

E: because my second child will see it. And then, to make matters worse, she has one daddy with somebody else, this one has one daddy. When my child grows up and says but mommy you can get another man to love, why don't you just give daddy another chance, do you understand? Then if things don't work out and I leave this man, I'm going to have two children from two different men. I'm not the type of person that will just jump into a bed with just anybody and say okay I'll be a wife, I'll have your baby, it's okay if it don't work out, I'll just be a mother with two different children from two different fathers, no!

F: So you're taking your daughter into consideration?

E: Yes. It's... er... people say it's selfish on my part because I don't want to find happiness, but I'll rather be selfish for myself, than be selfish on my child.

F: But I also wonder, is... it sounds also to me like maybe it's not so much a disbelief in love but maybe that love can take different forms?

- E: It can take different forms, and I got a thing on my phone, just recently I had it, I wanted to put it on my 'tp' but I said no, just now someone will think I'm in love and ja...
- F: I think that's exactly it, there's a difference between love and being in love.
- E: Ja. I'll show you the saying, I really, really enjoy the saying. Okay ja, here's it here, that's the saying I really like.
- F: *"Everyone says love hurts, but that's not true, loneliness hurts, rejection, losing someone hurts, envy hurts. Everyone gets these things confused with love but in reality love is the only thing in this world that covers up all pain and makes someone feel like whole again. Love is the only thing in this world that does not hurt."* What about true love because it's quite different from what you're saying?
- E: I really like this saying, because it's the truth. This is the saying that kind of made me thought that no, what you're saying is right, you understand? But I don't believe that I am capable of loving a man the way I loved my husband, because I will forever be worried about what is going to tick off him, what is going to go wrong, because the way I see it these are men, right? If they're not drinking, they are drugging. If they're not drugging, they are abusing you. If they're not abusing you, they are cheating on you, you understand? So that 1% of happiness, it's there, but I'm not that ignorant and gullible to go and try and find it in this world that is so full of men, you understand? So it's like I'm this one lonely fish in a massive ocean around the world, I'm struggling. Am I really going to find that one person in this ocean? I highly doubt it. So the ones that found it like you, I'm happy for you. I'm not jealous, I'm happy but I'm not going to see your happiness and try and find my happiness because sometimes I think I might find happiness, but for how long will mine last? You understand? There's so many other hurts out there and there's other people that's been robbed by love and ignorant by their love, and in denial by their love. I don't want to be that person, and I'm going to do everything in my power to stay clean. I don't know what will trigger me off, you understand? So what in case I fall in love with someone, my child falls in love with someone, and it doesn't work out?

F: Does that mean that you do worry about possibly relapse if something triggers it?

E: I'm not going to say the thought hasn't crossed my mind, because it has, that is the reason why I don't want to date. I had another guy after Neil, his name is Faizel, he's the guy who brought me into Minds Alive and took me there and picked me up from there, I really, really loved him, but he was a married man, he was having an affair. My mother doesn't know about it, she knows that he was my steady boyfriend, you see? Because his wife was this rich girl, this rich woman, he's also rich, but he's not as rich as her, and he was overpowered by her, and he met me. I've always known him, but I was married at that time. And then in the end I said you know what, let me give me a chance and see where it goes, because I wasn't looking for a relationship, I just needed a partner, that's all. There's he, and he used to spend hours with us, there's my child, you see, here?

F: You looked happy.

E: We were happy. And there's she there. We were very happy. He bought me this phone, we used to go on road trips and stuff together. But the sad thing there is, in the end, there's he here, always happy, you see, always, always happy.

F: He does look very cheerful.

E: Ja always, he made me strong, he taught me about life and about people and about being me and about stop wearing your heart on your sleeve because you're going to keep on getting hurt, and everything. And in the end the sad thing there was, he wanted to leave his wife for me, you understand? I wasn't going to break up somebody's home, I really wasn't. I really loved him, I'm not saying I didn't love him. I loved him so much that it hurt me to let him go. We got caught, not on the job, but we dated for one and a half years, she found messages on his phone because in the night he was chatting to me, and he never deleted. And he told me he loved me Estelle, then I said I love you too and then she phoned and I said 'no, I'm his friend, what am I going to say? I said 'I'm his friend.' and she said but he's saying he loves you. I said ja friends talk like that, because I have another friend, a friend that, he's this guy with a

big stomach, I know him for years, everybody at work thinks we're jolling but we're not, nothing at all. And I'll show you his picture, and he now, he makes us laugh the whole day through, and we talk about everything, I know him for 10 years, we worked together for...

F: Oh wow, that long?

E: Yes, for 10 years we worked together, here. He is the only person I trust at work, here. [laughter] See his stomach?

F: He does have a big belly.

E: Ja. There's his stomach, see that?

F: He looks very sweet though.

E: He only jokes, and he sounds like this, he says guys I told you, I told you, but you don't fucking listen to me, and me, uh-huh.

F: So he's a close friend hey?

E: Ja, the few that I have, I'm very, very close. I'll have more.

F: No it's fine, I have a few more questions then we're done.

E: No it's fine, 20 minutes it will be okay?

F: Ja. So what I wanted to ask you is, in terms of your recovery, we've spoken a lot about what led to all the relapses and ...[indistinct] So I'm just wondering, in terms of your recovery, what has been your experience of recovery, because your recovery's been like in intervals.

E: Yes, so when I went into rehab, Ibogaine, it was a 4 day course, Faizel took me in and we were, see now I've got no reception... we were, they gave me my capsules and I was... started buzzing, you just hear this zzzzzing noise. You can also do it just to experience it, it will be nice, er... where er... you go there, even non addicts also go, you know. So your first hand experience of what it's like to go through a detox programme. This I promise you will be a nice experience for you as well, I actually encourage it. You'll hear one zzzzzing noise from the time you take the tablets, till the time you leave the place there'll be zzzzzing in your ears, so right? And then you sleep through. It's not painful,

it's just irritating noise in your ears. And when you close your eyes you just see visions in front of you, everything that ever hurt you in your life is in front of you, like on TV, and Doc explained it. So it's like a TV that's going off in your eyelids, running through your eyelids. And he said when you can't make it any more, you open your eyes. And when you open your eyes, it's fine, but you are giddy, giddy, giddy.

F: What does giddy mean?

E: It's like er... you're Muslim so you haven't drank?

F: No.

E: Okay, it's like...

F: Babelaas hey?

E: Drunk, it's like drunk. Or like super, super goofed, it's like that there, it's like that. I think you should do it. just to feel, because you're Muslim, I don't think you'll ever do it, because you're very well educated to do it, to actually go and do a drink or do a drug, so this will be a nice experience for you, right, where you can actually experience what it's like to be goofed, but you're not goofed. It's all herbal, you're not goofed at all, and it's not going to break your religion, because Doc is Muslim and you'll be able to go and do that, and er... they will come and they will do your blood pressure for you, there was a lot of love as well there given, they do your blood pressure for you, they'll take care of you, they'll comfort you, he did it for me for a free year by the way.

F: Ja I hear [indistinct]

E: A year, he was the only person throughout my whole drugging experience who helped me out when I needed help. I actually doubted his service, I told him I don't think it will work, you know. And he gave me, even if I was done for free, they took such good care of me like I'm paying the big bucks like everybody else pays, you understand? And I was shocked by it and so I had a very nice experience there and I will recommend that to everybody. Everybody that I know that has money that is drugging, I send them here, I would send them

here. Doc gave me back my life through his treatment...lbogaine, it was pain free, hassle free and...since then I'm drug free.

F: Is there any relevant...[indistinct]

E: Ja, my mother, my child, the whole scenario in the house, that Neil and how he told me that page was showing, my husband and his drugging, when I was small there was that children, and then my mother was screaming, and everything. Everything negative that has ever, ever happened in my life came to mind, everything that hurt me, everything that was in my subconscious mind came out and it was released. I have released every hurt and pain that I ever bottled up, it was just overflowing and overflowing that night. And the boys, Doc came in my room that night, early hours in the morning with the nurse to do my blood pressure, and I think give me an injection or something they came in to do... to check the blood pressure, and give me another two capsules because my blood pressure had dropped in the night, right, so they had to come and give me another two capsules also, and then I said let's see the boys, so giddy, like still very drowsy, not sleeping drowsy, but just out of senses. He's showing me his tablet, he's showing the boys all there screaming and running and hallucinating, everything, there's a little thin boy there and he was hallucinating, screaming and running and saying something is trying to catch him, and all the boys are rolling in their beds and tossing and turning, but they were all shocked that I actually woke up and had a bath and everything and came out the next day. They were still in their buzzing states of mind. And I was strong, I am really a very strong person inside and out. And I woke up, even the guy in charge, I forgot his name, he's a black guy, he's in charge, that girl that was there, standing there smoking, her name's Sarah, can you see, that came to me, ja her name is Sarah, and er... this guy, he was a very, very nice guy and even he says, but look here, that lady is already pimped up, dressed up, and look at you all, you had the same amount that she's had and she's awake! Some of the guys were sleeping for 3 days after they took that medication and I woke up. And er... and I was laughing, right. And but when you want to sit now, the chair is here, but when you move your hands, your hands are moving in 3D, there's like a white line that's going on, you know the starlight, when you do the starlight, they get the starlight lines, I was seeing

those lines and the chair was there, but it was in lines. So we had to go feel for the chair and pull the chair and sit down like that, so it was a very annoying after effect with that, right?

F: Ja.

E: But it was manageable. But then zzzing, now because that zwing is in your ear, you're like, can you also hear a zwing, it's like a mosquito, like you sort of like doing, and you thought maybe I'm mad, but everybody when they said, because I'm still hearing it and that medication is supposed to be out now, I said you all can you hear the zwing noise, they said, they all burst out laughing, because they were talking way before I come, right and they said ja we can hear it. And I said, thank God, I thought I was going mad. They all started laughing because they all came out and asked the same question about that noise, I thought it's just me, because I'm sitting there so long with that zwinging in my ears, and I can hear like, kachoo kachoo kachoo, because they're talking, but you can't hear because that zwing is so loud in your ear. And er... and I'm screaming and asking them, can you still hear the zwing noise, or is it just me? They say no, it is just you, I mean no it is all of us, then they say that's why we're screaming, because we don't really know what is happening. [laughter]. And then the black guy was there and he says no it's normal, you all are going to hear for the next 4 days and as the days go by that zwinging is going to wear off slowly and slowly; and then after I went into... when I came of rehab Faizel and me went on a road trip, ja he took me on a road trip and the road trip was to Kokstad, and that road trip helped me a lot.

F: In what way?

E: Because I was getting irritated and if I was at home I would have then smoked, that's the type of irritation, still withdrawals.

F: Okay.

E: Ja, so that's all.

F: So what is in the... how long are you clean now?

E: Me, June, July, September, August, 3 years.

F: Three years? Congratulations.

E: Thank you.

F: How does that feel?

E: It feels very nice, it feels very normal that I can fit in again without feeling guilty because when I was smoking I was making sure that everyone couldn't notice, that's why I was making it such a big thing not to be noticed, you see?

F: Okay.

E: That's why I made a big issue not to be noticed that I'm a smoker because you can sense a smoker from a mile away you know?

F: Yes.

E: So I didn't want to be a part of that. I didn't want people to judge me and class me because they will eventually took my child entirely and I didn't want that to happen. I want to still be able to hold a job, I still want to be able to fit in.

F: In terms of the...just let me look in here... In terms of your challenges, what have been your biggest challenges in the recovery in this past year?

E: To be honest, er... when I came out of rehab and I came out of Kokstad, I never left my house for six months because I was afraid of going, I was afraid, I was terrified of going back into this junk, okay, because I've now witnessed so much, I've witness people... I've witnessed someone get raped, this girl was smoking with us and this boy was going to go buy more, and he offered me to come and then this girl said no can she... I said okay I'll come, then she said no, no, I'll go so you won't be alone. I said no don't go. She went. She got raped. And the guy came and ran and called us, by the time we can come back and help, the boys were gone, she was sitting there crying. That was one bad incident that I won't want to... I'm glad that never happened to me. It's sad that never happened to her, but in reality she took my place, you understand?

F: Ja.

E: And er... she told me to my face, it could have been you, you know?

F: Scary. I can imagine that.

E: Ja. What would I have done? I've got a Sia ever since then. I'll show you, Sia, double caps, so certain things that happened to me in my past, really does affect me in my present, understand? And when I'm putting just for my child and sending her with her father, I put inner shirts for her, just so that some sick pervert won't get the wrong idea, you understand? And sometimes they might want to carry the child and put their fingers you know? Under the chest, so I do my best, I really do. Paranoia is a very big thing for me because I honestly believe you rather think like a crook and then you'll be safe in this normal society that the normal that we consider society to be, then thinking that everybody is all sunshine and butterflies, when this world is not. This world I honestly believe is hell on earth, and you'll only be in heaven or in a happier place is when you die. This is hell on earth, because right now there's so much of crime, there's so much of corruption, the people are raping people, people are murdering people, it's terrible, it's very bad, where fathers are raping their own daughters. Now it's a very big risk that I'm taking with my ex husband, very big risk. I know he won't hurt her in that way, but I don't know. You understand?

F: Yes.

E: It's like I know he won't, but I also don't know.

F: It is a big risk now.

E: Extremely. Sometimes when she tells me her cookie is burning or it's paining, I won't ask her no questions, -straight on the bed, pants down and checking. And then when I see everything is okay and the hole is still small and it's not bruised or anything, Atiya what happened? No, I was drinking a lot of cool drink today. Okay. It's like a relief, you know?

F: Yes.

E: It's like that there.

F: Do you think it comes from that you experienced that girl, that girl that took your place and then...?

E: Ja, and then that whole locking up incident. I went to buy makeup from this girl who's my friend, and later on in the day she accused me of stealing her ring

which I never ever saw in my life, and I got a whole lot of hiding, I have a lawsuit for this thing now starting, ja and we're suing for R3 Million from the State for unlawful arrest, defamation of character and assault. It's a name I did not want to get. I did my best to do the junk, and I not get labelled and then to make matters worse, I got labelled when I'm innocent. Huh-uh.

F: So those are I suppose reminders of that past life are still with you?

E: Ja.

F: Those are your greatest challenges right now. Any other challenges?

E: Er... no not really, the dents are all there, the smokers are still smoking, my mother hasn't changed, you understand? The biggest challenge for any addict is themselves because you are getting clean, the gulley is still there, it's still a gulley. The dealer is still there, he's still going to want your business whether you're clean or not clean. You see, temptation is still there, when you're walking on the road where I stay, there's a den right near my house, so you can imagine on the road outside my house, how much of straws I find. Near the Plaza there's three places you can buy drugs, so there's so much of straws around. I speak to my smoker friends.

F: You haven't lost contact with them?

E: No. I'm not that type of person because I'm clean I'm better than you, huh-uh.

F: So if all of that is still present, what's different?

E: It's *me* that wants to change. It's *me* that wants to stop. The big thing is me. When you speak to an addict, they need to change for themselves. Not for their child because if that child dies, that person is going to go back. Not for their husband or wife because if their husband or wife leaves them or cheats on them, they are going to go back. With Imtiaaz, I told Imtiaaz I said Imtiaaz when you go into rehab, when you are going to come out, you do not have a home, you do not have a family, you have a daughter who'll only be allowed to see you when you are clean. So do not get clean because of me or because of your child, because if something happens, if I pull your child away, or your child

has to die, or I has to die, you are going to relapse. So if you are going to get clean, get clean because you want to for yourself.

F: Has he gone to do it for himself now?

E: Yes. So when I got clean, I followed my advice to him, you see? So when I got clean I didn't get clean for my child, I didn't get clean for society, I got clean for myself, because if my child grows up one day and tells me mommy I hate you, I can't stand you, I'm not going to go and smoke. I got clean for myself. If I lose my child I will be sad, you know how sad I'll be, I'm crying when she's alive, what will I do when she's dead? But I will make it, but I just won't go and smoke. You understand? I lost my grandfather on the 2nd June. It wasn't an easy transaction for us, it's still not an easy transaction for us, but I never go and smoked. You understand, because I don't want to be an addict again, I don't want to pick up and smoke again. It's not in me, but I can... today when I was giving food some of the boys were smoking, I saw all that. I could have went if I wanted to, but I don't want to smoke the damned thing. You understand? I'm not going to stop you from doing it because I'm not doing it, that's your own thing. But I can advise you, and when I told them this is the story, I'm coming here to meet you, they got a shock. A psychologist? What's wrong with you? You seem to be someone that's all... I'm very strict and I'm very stern at work hey, if they're not my friends. Only my friends know my Elle side, like only you know my Elle side, right, but at work I look like a dragon. My head is... I promise you, my team hates me. Very strict, very stern, because when I go to work I work not for me alone, I work for my child as well. So when I am on the dialler nobody can interfere with me. I go back early from my breaks onto the dialler, pushing for the sales to make money for my child because my basic is sorted, that I know can't get touched, but my commission is our play money, you understand, it's extra money. That is why I choose to work in a call centre, because I'm getting so much more money, I'm getting money for going to work every day, I'm getting money for my sales, I'm getting money for extra things I give on my sale parts, and I'm getting my basic, you see?

F: Ja.

E: So I get paid more than my sister, everybody, so I'm happy, ja.

F: What a journey Estelle. What then does recovery mean to you?

E: Hmm, To me recovery means ongoing...forever and always... Let me tell you, I've been to NA, AA meetings, even though I don't agree with everything they teach, right, however in the same breath I do believe that recovery can best be described as a disease, like by NA & AA teachings...meaning life altering, life threatening, lifelong.

F: A journey then?

E: Yip.

F: So what's next for you?

E: Hmm, I don't know.

F: We're at the end.

E: No, no, it's fine.

F: No, we're at the end. I wanted to say, at the beginning you started your stories saying you want to paint the picture.

E: Yes.

F: So how is the picture now and what do you envision the picture to look like?

E: Er... in the beginning it was a very sad picture, like maybe a rainy day, for an example where things don't seem to be working out for people, in my personal life my life was... I was always going to be like a nobody, and always trying to prove myself to people, to make people love me and er... doing things so people can love me, it's always, for me in the beginning it was a search for love, all right? And when I finally met my husband, I got love from him. I met my mother-in-law and I got love from her, and I saw love for the first time in that whole... and when I lost it, it was hell [emotional]. You know, and I go back to being the unhappy person, no pets, no family, don't have my own house, I was in a sad, dark grey room, you know, with no – no sunlight at the end of that tunnel. I drugged, my journey was a drugging journey. I'm grateful for this journey because it's made me a stronger person, and now that I've been there, I've done that, I'm wearing the T-shirt that's saying I'm proud of who I am

because if it hadn't been through my sad life, if it hadn't been through my dark and grey days, I'd have never known that I can be this strong person that I am today. I could have never known my true potential, and how strong I am, because I honestly believe God will never throw you into a hole that he knows you cannot climb out of. Honestly, I have no regrets of my drugging...none at all...I believe that God has paved a way for us all to enter Heaven....the roads may not be the same...some may travel a longer road than most...but God Created me the way I am...I'm unique...I have my life my story my message of hope my battle scars. My life may not be perfect but then again who is? I'M Alive I'm free from the captivity of drugs. I'm happy, I AM BLESSED! So if you are in a hole and if you are in a pit right now, it's because you are there to learn a lesson. My lesson was to learn myself how to climb out and not depend on somebody else to help me out and to love me through my situation. I did it without love from anyone, and now that I am out of the situation, I've learnt that sometimes some people just need that little hug, they just need that little care, that little smile. I'm the type of person that if I see you walking in the street, I don't know who you are, but you're looking nice, I will tell you. 'I'll just stop you very quickly, I just have to say you're very, very pretty.' You know the smile that you'll get on the faces of that person? I will stop a random stranger, sometimes my friends are there, say you are very beautiful. That stranger will stop and say thank you, or their hair is... you can see this person put an effort in this outfit or their appearance, and they really look nice, you will tell them that because you don't know what that person is going through in their personal life for them to dress like that. I'm the type of person if I'm having a fucked up day today, tomorrow when I go work I'm going to be [indistinct] no-one must know. You understand? In my house when I was crying on the 30th, that er... 31st I was just amazing because yesterday my mother tried to bring my spirit down, but today my spirit is up again. I am a conqueror, I've conquered too much to be a nobody. My bank balance doesn't have to be high for me to be a somebody, you understand? I don't need to be driving this flashy car, I can move in a taxi to be a somebody because if I can believe in myself that I can do something, why can't you? That's how I am. And you can do more, because you might have more resources than me. So go out there and do something to change somebody's life. Don't tell me, hey listen Estelle, I've got a lekker

cabby. I'm going to ask you, what's your father driving? You understand what I'm saying? That's how I am.

F: So what's your picture looking like in your future?

E: My future is looking now very, very bright, because I'm doing very well, I'm believing in myself. I've learnt the hard way, never depend on people because people will let you down. The people you love most in this world are the people who will let you down and who will hurt you the most, even if you get sworn at by a total stranger, you'll forget about tomorrow. If you get sworn at by your family do you think you're going to forget? Never. But now I learnt to brush it off. People will tell you negative things because it's their mind-set, they are negative. Negative things will not get me down because I'm already positive myself. I'm positive with everything besides the HIV [laughter] and my future right now, that's looking very bright. It's me sitting at the beach watching the waves and watching everything go by and my past, I always tell people, keep your past in your rear-view mirror. Before you turn back... do you drive?

F: Yes.

E: Okay. So before you turn back, and make a U-turn, you're going to check that rear-view mirror, you're going to see your past, don't lock it up and keep it away in a tunnel or bottle it up. huh-uh, keep it right there in front of your eyes, right there on top your rear-view mirror. In front of you but above you, so you can see it every now and then, and not forget where you came from, because if something happens and you decided to turn back, that is what you're going to. Is that what you really want to do, or would you rather go through this little storm that you're having now, because that storm is a tsunami, that will one day kill you. You can't keep on playing if you're going to turn back and go back down that memory lane, you see? So now wherever I can, I do my best to help people, I share my story with whoever needs to be shared to, because I honestly believe somewhere along the line it's going to help somebody, even if it helps one person, I'm happy, my job is done because I've changed one life, that one life will change somebody else's. You know Doc, he was an ex addict. He told his story?

F: I have a meeting with him but we've spoken about it briefly.

E: I won't tell you his story, right? But he has his own story. Now he's a man who had nothing, he's been to institutions, he's been through incarcerations, he's had it hard. He would understand best what I'm talking about and I would understand best what somebody else is going through. Now you through our experience will understand where someone else is coming, and you can relate to other people who's coming around from the same background, I mean it's not everybody who is drugging for happiness, some people drug for happiness, some people were drugging with a group of friends and got addicted to it and then can't come out, some people's families could have led them to it. Some people might have been drugging to suppress feelings, some girls might get raped and do it. Mine was to find out something, you understand?

F: Did you ever get to the bottom of it?

E: Yes. I forgave my husband when I had my first official roster when I was trying to detox myself in the house. My granny was at home and I went Day 1, Day 2, Day 3, without the drug. Came Day 3, the night, I was *finished*. Finished like you would never, ever make it. my granny was at the house and my grandfather, I said ma... they knew I was detoxing, they knew I relapsed after the whole incident of my baby, they knew it, I told them, I didn't want to hide it anymore, you know me I'm a drug addict, you wanna throw me on the streets, throw me, I don't give a damn. That was the type of personality I had, I'm done, I'm done, I'm done with life. The people that I loved the most, that I trusted the most fucked me over. My husband also fucked me over, I was finished. What else can anyone do to me? Rather just kill me, take a knife and stab me, you understand? That's the point I was in my life. And so I was going to do it myself, I wanted to stop and I wanted to stop with my own self. I remember my granny and I told my granny, Ma, how's the loan, Ma? She said, for what Estelle? I said I want to buy something. She said what can you buy? I said I wanna buy same thing. Hey, my granny started praying for me. Oh God, she put her hand on my hand and she's praying for me. My granny's church is a different church, they don't believe in touching and praying, they don't believe in screaming and praying, they don't believe in anyone's screams, because God hears all, he's omnipresent, he can hear all, he can see all. You pray from your heart. You are praying to him as a whisper prayer. My granny prayed for me and I'm not

one to believe in prayers and all so much, remember I have a hair strand faith, and er... hey she prayed and she prayed and she prayed, and she pressed my back, and she pressed my hands and she pressed my neck. And then I went and stopped, I felt *swaak* [bad] for I asked her for the money, I felt relieved, I felt that someone loves me enough to pray for me, she doesn't love me enough to give me the money to go see me uh relapse, but she loves me enough to give me that money and not for me to go back down the road, because I'm doing so well, I'm already on my third day of recovery, so she helped me, you understand, just by that prayer. I went and slept and I got clean for that time, I got clean, and then I relapsed again.

F: When was your answer?

E: When I relapsed and I asked my granny, I was so desperate that I asked my granny for money. I won't, I've got pride, I won't ask them for your money to smoke with. I don't believe in gambling, you understand? So I won't give you money for you going to Casino, I won't because I don't believe in it.

F: All right, so what is the answer?

E: It's that er... you'll do anything for the drug, and I didn't blame him for stealing the clothes, I didn't blame him for... I got this ex because of him, I didn't blame him for my ex, because I feel, I felt, I found what I was searching for. I feel... I was feeling for the drug, you understand? I felt ashamed to ask my granny for the money, and I found my answer as to why he was stealing, why he was doing everything, why he hit me for the money, because the way I was feeling, I was feeling so miserable, I was feeling so needy of this drug, I went and asked my granny for money. I won't do that, I won't. Because you must know, I'm all about name, I won't lower myself even more worse to go ask my granny for R20 to go buy the thing. But I did that, and I wasn't that kind of person to go open her purse, and I'd tell you ma I'm coming now. Not me. So...

F: So in that moment your answer was forgiveness?

E: I forgave him and I understood why he did that, why I got my ex for life, because here's this woman, she's got the money, she don't want to give me. You understand? And then I understood why he stole the clothes because he

needed the money to go smoke all the time. I understood why he spent most of his time in the gulley and not with me. I understood why he didn't want to be with me or carry my child. But what I can't understand up till today is why they don't like having bath.

F: Doing what?

E: Like having bath. I can't, I can't, I can't, for the life of me I can't..

F: [laughter] Oh Estelle!

E: [laughter] I'm telling you.

F: That's the one thing that's still bugging you [laughing].

E: *[laughing]* It's true. Because he wasn't homeless, he had a home.

F: Last question. Can you please describe how you have experienced the process of sharing your story?

E: To be honest with you, I'm not a stranger to speaking about what I've been through...I'm a proud recovering drug addict...why I say recovering is if I don't protect myself, if I let my guard down...If I allow myself to forget where I came from I'll end up right where I've started...I keep my past in my rear view mirror...meaning before reversing I check my rear view...I see there isn't anything for me back there so I decide to move forward....to me it was nyc...I felt as if I wrote a novel...I just hope my words my stories my answers help and touch someone...even if it's just one then I know I've done a good job. [Phone rings] My ex-husband.

F: Is he calling you?

E: Ja, I've got his picture there, so when baby talks to him, she speaks to him on speaker phone, so she can see her father when she's speaking to him.

F: That's sweet.

E: Ja.

F: Do you guys get along now?

E: Mmm [speaking on cellphone] He bought her last week, week before – oh my battery's going to die. Last week Sunday he took her to Mc Donald's and he bought her that ice-cream, that same one that I bought. And I tell him Imtiaaz the child never had hot chocolate, give her hot chocolate, because she'll be thirsty. He goes and buys that ice thing, she comes home, mummy see what daddy bought. I said to her but Atiya it's half finished. Here, I was drinking because I was thirsty. And then she got so sick after that night.

F: Shame.

E: And I had to take her to the doctors and I never got to work and stuff.

F: Estelle I just want you to say that uhm...the person who sits in front of me is a woman of such strength, and another thing is I still don't understand why you call yourself a heartless bitch because all I see is someone with so much heart. And what stood out the most for me was in your search for love, you ended up finding love in yourself and I think that is the most profound thing that came out. So I salute you, 1 year, 4 months and counting!

E: [laughter]

F: I look forward to the picture you paint with your child in the future. I see it as being very bright.

E: Ja, she's naughty this one. There she here, my screen saver, look.

F: Cutie pie.

F: So thank you so much.

[End of recording]

Interview transcript: Miriam

Transcript keys:

- *Interviewer: F (Fatima)*
- *Interviewee: M (Miriam)*

Note: Interviews have been transcribed verbatim so as to preserve the characterisation and authenticity of the participants' linguistic repertoire, and to depict the nature of the interviews.

[Start of recording]

F: Thank you for meeting with me today and sharing your story with me. Just to let you know that I will be using a voice recorder as well as my cell phone to record our chat today so that we have a backup in case the voice quality on one may not be that good. As you can see, no one is on the line listening in.

M: Thank you. I don't mind if someone's listening (laughs). I actually went on radio 1584 station a couple of years ago. They wanted to know about my life and whatever. I spoke on the radio about it.

F: That's great.

M: I'm not sure where to start.

F: Before we started the recording, we were chatting about self-acceptance. Maybe you could start by telling me about how you got to that point?

M: The thing is how it gets to that point is you see when you have gone through, or when I, I am going to speak in terms of I.

F: Please do.

M: So when I have, the fact that I have gone through all of this and so much of it through my life, it's like I am at a point where I don't really care much about what people think anymore.

F: Ja.

M: And my whole thing is you don't know what it took to get me to where I am today. So if you are going to judge me then you know screw you.

- F: Mmmm.
- M: That kind of thing.
- F: Knock yourself out with the French.
- M: ...[laughing]
- F: Hey, that's not even French.
- M: ...[laughing] So uhm so ja I guess that point of acceptance came, look you can't be in recovery if you haven't accepted. So acceptance is a huge part of, of uhm recovery, so there is a thing that I learned in TC, accept and move on.
- F: Okay.
- M: So that's the thing and guilt is the biggest feeling that you shouldn't feel when you are in, in recovery, and if you start dwelling on that guilt and all that, that is what will send you back. Straight back.
- F: Okay.
- M: And I won't lie I have my moments where sometimes I think yoh how did I do this and you know like with my cashier that got fired now for, for stealing.
- F: Ja.
- M: When I caught him stealing. There was a little bit of guilt that came up in me because I was like screaming at him and thinking to myself but wait a minute I did this shit back then. How, who am I to start judging him and be angry with him. So all my, my past things came up and I looked it and it's like you know I am a total different person so it doesn't matter anymore. It really doesn't matter and that's how I got there I suppose.
- F: I think what you just said now, the, the thing that's stood out for me was, you, it reminded me of, uhm I think I have shared this with you, one of the participants said, uhm on his road to recovery, he is moving forward, excuse me but he has made sure that he places his past not in the car, not on a passenger seat, on the back seat or even ahead of him, but he keeps it in his rear-view mirror, so it's a constant reminder of where he has come from and where he is going to.
- M: Yes.

F: And in that example about your cashier, that just like popped into my head because I am thinking, it is so amazing that you are at a place where you can use it as a means of reflecting on your own behaviour.

M: Yes, yes.

F: Like that, you were judging how you responded to him, you know and you could use your past as a reflection. I think that takes a lot of strength, to get to such a place, uhm considering where, many people, it will be a trigger instead of just a, an opportunity to reflect.

M: Yes, yes exactly.

F: Okay so in terms of self-acceptance which you say is important I am just wondering what does that mean? What does self-acceptance mean, what does it entail, what does it look like? What does it mean to be accepting of self?

M: Uhh I don't know how to answer that ...[laughing]. I really, I don't know how to answer that? Uhm I would say self-acceptance is more like you see my scars, you see my tattoo, you see all this junk on me, yet I will walk around with a short sleeve and not care. And not in an arrogant kind of way.

F: Ja.

M: But just in a genuine, I don't care, it is who I am, it's where I am from. Uhm like I mean for example I see, you know when I stand on that till now, and I see ...[laughing] the customers eyes, I see them looking at my, at my arms, I, you know you get a few of them that will ask you know what happened there, and okay the answer is entirely how I feel about the person, either you deserve to know the truth or I just, you just really judging me so to hell with you. It was a fatal accident ...[laughing]

F: ...[laughing]

M: You know sometimes I don't even have to answer them, I just give them a look and they know and they you know, things like that.

F: Okay ja.

M: So I think that is, that is to me self-acceptance.

F: Okay.

M: It's just knowing who you are and accepting who you are and who you were, not forgetting who you were. Not forgetting who you were.

F: Right.

M: Not forgetting who you were. Ja.

F: Okay.

M: Going on from there.

F: Alright so you know, I think it also speaks to an element of self-love if I understand your correctly?

M: Ohhh, ja. Okay ...[laughing]

F: ...[laughing] okay.

M: I don't think the scars on my body ...[laughing] expresses much of self-love ...[laughing] but uhm yes for now, if we are talking about then, no, no, obviously no. Self-love then. But now yes you have to do that. I mean, I won't leave the house without makeup on. I mean that's just be because I don't know, I want to look pretty and I want to look nice and all the jazz.

F: Okay.

M: Whereas back then, I didn't give a damn how I looked, I wouldn't brush my hair for how many weeks and I wouldn't bath and all that. To me that was was junk....did I go of the point now?

F: Not at all. I think, I think you make a point in that self-love is also about physical acceptance too.

M: Mmmm.

F: Which is what you are describing now, uhm also physical pride, so uhm, I don't, I couldn't even tell that you have make up on, just on the side not, because it looks so natural but you know it's not even about putting makeup on, some people put makeup on to cover, but you clearly don't. You clearly put it on because there is an element of taking pride in yourself.

M: Ja, ja.

F: Uhm which you compare to your past where you described the opposite. So where was self-love in your past?

M: Nowhere.

F: Right now it's sounds present.

M: Nowhere. Absolutely nowhere.

F: What are you listening to?

M: I think I heard name and I will freak out ...[laughing]

F: No no no need, that's fine we will handle it as it comes that's fine.

M: So ja, no there was no self-love anywhere.

F: Let's talk a little bit about uhm your family. I found it so interesting when you mentioned after I met your dad and uhm I remember coming in here previously and seeing this man and you interacting and I, especially when I got your story as it was. I think that's the father you know and when you didn't say that it is, I thought to myself wow, like I was speechless. Uhm and I am just thinking, it's, it's as if you are both on the road to recovery.

M: Ja.

F: And I don't just mean in terms of your relationship but he has got his own recovery, uhm can you maybe tell me a bit about how things transcended because I can't believe that the man I see outside is the man that you described in your story.

M: In my story.

F: And he was pivotal in your story. So important that he was what you started your story with.

M: Is it.

F: Ja. The first paragraph had your dad in it.

M: Mmmm, I think every paragraph must have had him in it hey ...[laughing].

- F: Ja he, he phased out as the story continued but ja he was on the front page.
- M: My dad, shoo, I know basically growing up, what I know of my father is what I was told firstly. From my mother. The, I don't know if I did mention a Russian roulette, uhm situation or event in that story. Where my father held a gun to his head?
- F: You did.
- M: I must have.
- F: Like in a sentence.
- M: In a sentence?
- F: Ja.
- M: Okay that is the first thing I remember about my father. I was very young, I don't remember going on holidays with him. I don't remember him changing me or helping me with my homework or fetching me from school or taking me to school any of that. The first memory of my father is a gun to his head.
- F: And that was not a told memory, that was what ...[intervened]
- M: That was, that was my memory, I remember I was sitting in the room, with my cousin, we were playing Lego. ...[laughing] I will never forget, we were playing Lego, and we heard a gunshot go off. So we ran and I don't know how we knew it was a gunshot, but we knew and we ran out of the room to see what was going on and there is my father standing in the passage with a gun to his head. So and he pulled the trigger and oh it was madness. My cousin I still remember my cousin ran, didn't know which way to run ...[laughing] he ran into my father.
- F: Oh wow ...[laughing]
- M: Turned around and ran back the other way. So uhm, so ja that's, that's well my first memory or my first, sorry ...[intervened]
- F: ...[laughing]
- M: Uhm and then further on, look okay my parents got divorced. I was very young when that happened and uhm, I was now, I remember being in court, I do remember being in court and my mother asking who do you want to live with,

your mother or your father, and I remember my answer being why I can't live with both of you. Why do I have to choose. Eventually everything happened, they got divorced, I stayed with my mother, I was granted one alternative weekends with my father and one long holiday and one short holiday with him. But he was always drunk. And this is also a memory, not what I was told. So I do know that many times my mother, I would wait by the window, you know, when is my dad coming, and then I would just know, okay he went and he got drunk and he is not coming. Or if he does come, he is drunk in the car and he is with his girlfriend and we are going to his girlfriend's house and he is going to get more drunk and I am going to look after him and, I was very young at this stage, I was, as the years went by it carried on like that and eventually I started with my crap also, uhm obviously after happening, I think we will get, I am going to end up going like this.

F: Please do.

M: I am going to end up like going like that.

F: That's fine.

M: So uhm what would happen on weekends when he didn't fetch me, he would send his brother's wife or his ugh wife's his sister's husband, damn it ...[laughing].

F: So your uncle.

M: My uncle. His sister's husband to come and fetch me. And in that way I grew close to this man, you know because I mean okay he would fetch me and he would make sure I would see my dad that weekend and you know we would go to his house and I would eat with the family and stuff go home, wait for my dad, okay if he shows he shows, if he doesn't he doesn't but then uhm, this uncle would fetch us and take us to go and eat, me and my grandmother and uhm ja, so, eventually my uncle I think he tried to, look I was smoking cigarettes, I started becoming naughty.

F: How old were you then?

M: Probably about 12. 11 around there, but not real smoking like you know, puffing on my father's stompies or whatever.

F: Ja.

M: You know growing up like that, and then when I eventually did start smoking properly I think I must have been about 12. And I think that is where my uncle thought to himself, okay he can now use this to his advantage and that is when he saw me smoking outside and he busted me basically. Because that time you are still hiding from people that you are smoking and whatever.

F: Mmmm.

M: And he said no come get in the car we will go and buy cigarettes and I will take you somewhere to smoke and whatever.

F: Okay.

M: And uhm I am like okay kwaai you know, ahh cool, I will go, you know what I am saying and not realising that he is actually a dam prick but anyway. And that's when he molested me for the first time. He took me to the hill.

F: Mmmm.

M: There ja, parked there rubbed himself against me and you know and I, I could feel that this is not right. I was not fricken comfortable, I could feel he was fucking hard. Sorry and it was disgusting. I was still a virgin obviously and shit like that but it was, it was absolutely disgusting and uhm I think in his mind it was a case of if I tell anybody or I wouldn't tell anybody about it because then I would have to tell them that I was smoking and maybe I would be scared to tell them that you know. But anyway that's not the reason why I didn't say anything. That's not the reason. The reason I didn't say anything was because I didn't want my cousins to grow up the way I did, in a broken home. I thought to myself okay my uncle, my aunt is going to leave my uncle, I played this whole thing out in my mind. If I say anything, it happened on three different occasions, but I am not going to go into detail of all of that, it happened on three occasions, there was no penetration that's why the court threw it out, okay I will get there. I am rambling.

F: No. No I am with you, with you all the way. You were saying the reason why you didn't say anything?

M: Yes the way I played it out in my mind, if I say anything, my aunty is going to leave my uncle, the children are going to grow up the exact same way I grew up, you know without a father in their life and you know I didn't want that. I really didn't want that and uhm then I started going mad, I started taking drugs, I started drinking, started smoking weed and you know things like that and uhm, I think my cousins knew that I was catching on shit. Okay they did know, I would tell them I drink, I would go with my father and I would go and drink and maybe I was ...[inaudible] you know, around that age. I think my first drink was when I was ten.

F: Okay.

M: With my father. But he doesn't know that.

F: He doesn't know.

M: He was too drunk to know that I was drinking with him.

F: Okay what was that, was it just curiosity or?

M: Ja. And you know what when you are in that environment as a child, I, I suppose it's, it's like a norm, it seems like okay, everyone is doing this around me.

F: Okay.

M: You know. If I had these brains back then, I probably wouldn't have. But I didn't, I was still growing up and so, yes so I, I was very curious. I was very ...[laughing] very curious and that's what happened. Uhm, so ja, eventually I was so high one day, uhm I told my sister then, because she was also high with me, we were getting high in the car together, me and my sister.

F: Okay.

M: And two of our friends. So my brother, my sister, myself and my father, we were all on drugs and alcohol.

F: By drugs you mean, weed and alcohol? Or?

M: Drugs.

F: Other drugs?

M: Mmmm.

F: Like what.

M: My father used to smoke buttons.

F: Buttons? I have never heard of buttons?

M: I used to smoke buttons? Mandrax.

F: Is that the term for it? Buttons?

M: Buttons ja. Pille. So he used to crush it onto his weed and used to smoke it in a pipe.

F: So you used to do it together?

M: No. But there was one time when my father was busy rolling his, he was drunk and I know he was sitting on the one bed rolling his joint and I was busy in my cupboard and like I was facing like, like I was facing that way and he was facing that way, I was chopping my lines of coke in the cupboard and he was rolling his joint there, so we did it together but he never knew. I think he maybe suspected because one day as I pulled up my line, ahh he walked into the room and I looked up and I think I was probably white or whatever. So he, he knew but I think he felt also too guilty and too, too much to blame in a sense.

F: Okay right.

M: That he didn't say anything, he just left it, so and pretended that he didn't know anything.

F: Okay.

M: But I know he knew.

F: Mmmm. And so was your brother and your sister?

M: Me and my sister we ended up doing it together, after eventually she found out that I am doing it or whatever. She said you know what, rather do it with me

because I mean I am doing it, don't do it behind my back I know you safe and whatever, if you are with me. Uhm but I always felt like was protecting her, even though she is my older sister, she is smaller than me.

F: Okay ...[laughing]

M: ...[laughing] She is smaller than me okay. She is my older sister but she is small ...[laughing].

F: Okay Mmmm.

M: So but ja, my brother, on the other hand, him and her used to do it together.

F: Okay.

M: But he wouldn't, he was, we didn't have, when I was, when I was smaller we had a little bit of a relationship, I really did look up to my brother. But as time went on, when he, when he found us smoking weed and all of that shit stuff he tried to have me locked up and uhh it was crazy and that's where we started just you know, like to me it was a case of you want to throw me in jail because of fricken stupid matchbox of weed, but you take me with you when you go smoke and I know you are doing drugs, so what the hell. And that's where we, where our relationship kind of broke and after that he wrote me off up until this year.

F: This year?

M: Well when I came out of ...[intervened]

F: Okay.

M: Well maybe this year, I would say about this year. Uhm, but that's a whole other topic on its own. But ja the, eventually my, we are jumping again aren't we.

F: No I am with you.

M: Ja.

F: No we are good.

M: Okay ...[laughing]

F: Don't feel afraid to jump, I am following you. And, and let's be honest when we talk about stuff. It's natural to do so, so.

M: Is it?

F: Absolutely.

M: Okay.

F: Ja so please.

M: As long as it is normal.

F: It is absolutely fine. We jump, that's how we, that's how we communicate with the jumping, we are telling each other about something we saw and then next thing we are like we are relating it to what happened back in the day and that's just normal conversation so don't worry about it.

M: Uhm so ja, uhm my, ja I told my sister by the way, ja let's go back again.

F: ...[laughing]

M: ...[laughing] dammit, I told my sister about the whole thing and that is when her friend went and told my mother to come and listen to me. My mother laid the charge and everything, she was highly bevok. Sorry.

F: That's fine.

M: ...[laughing]

F: It's not the, no PG here. That's fine.

M: Okay she was very upset. And uhm it went to court and all that stuff and then the, okay they obviously did their investigations and questioned everybody and whatever and it turns out my cousins turned against me, told them that I just want to break up their home because I am jealous that they have a family and I don't, told them that I am, uhm a druggie and I am hallucinating and making everything up in my head and others told them I am looking for attention because that's all I ever did was to look for attention. So uhh eventually we found, we found this out, I think, I don't know how my mother found all this out but she found it out. Uhm they told her that the case is thrown out. They said there was no penetration and all evidence counts against me.

F: Shoo.

M: So I think that really screwed me up a lot further because like all this time I kept quiet for them and then this is what they do to me so, so ja. So, so ja, it's...it's hectic. Huh, anyway uhm.

F: You got lost there?

M: Ja I did.

F: Where were you?

M: I was, I was right here, because they come into the butcher and they have their fricken noses held high and they will look at me with this dirty look as if I fucked their lives up.

F: Wow so, still today. That continues.

M: Ja you see. That's where, that's where I drifted off to, like because when I said what I said now that I literally tried to protect them, and you know they turned around and did that to me, that's when I just started thinking now like, what the fuck did I do to them you know what I am saying.

F: Ja.

M: And like now, it's this week they having a functions and stuff for the one cousin that is getting married now.

F: Okay.

M: I don't go, even the last cousin who got married.

M: Okay they are not important. So like when she got married, I didn't go to any of the functions or whatever, but I went to the wedding.

F: Okay.

M: Biggest mistake of my life though, because I felt very uncomfortable there, but I went, I went for the sake of my father. But this time around I am telling him I am not going. I can't do it to myself, I did absolutely nothing to them and look they have never been a part of my life, I am talking about you know, twelve, thirteen, fourteen years ago, and ever since then I have never had them in my

life, they mean nothing to me. And uhm so my aunt was here the other day and she was like are you coming to any of the functions? And I looked at her and said you know I am not going to lie to you. I highly, highly doubt it. She said rather say in In Sha Allah [God willing], I said how can I say In Sha Allah, if I know that I am not, I am not going to be attending them. So ja, it's, it's messed up man. Uhm when I came out of one of my rehabs, I don't know which time it was but I came out of one and look I, I really wanted to come right at that time. Uhm and I thought okay look the only way that I am going to come right is if I get over this thing, so the director that was there, look at first they all started, they were all doubting me, my entire family, including my father.

F: Okay.

M: Was doubting this thing, they all said okay look they, they are not sure if, if this really happened or if I am just saying this or whatever, they doubted it. And eventually when I got to one of my rehabs that I went to twice, TC, the director said to them look here, every single time that she has been here, this has been an issue that came up, and every single time it's been what's the word, it's, uhh, the same?

F: Constant.

M: Consistent. Cons ...[intervened]

F: Constant, consistent.

M: Consistent. Ja, and uhm that's when they now started believing it. Okay, but also with a little bit of doubt and then he said to me the best way for you to get over something is to confront your situation. So I am like okay fine I will confront the fucken situation because all I want, I don't want the guy to end his marriage and end his life and all that shit, I don't want that. All I want is a confession. That, that will give me justice. I don't want to put him into jail and all that shit, that will happen in a year after, he will get his punishment you know but all I want is tell my family the truth. That's it, just, just tell the truth. That's all I want.

F: Ja.

M: And we were stupid enough to, to think that a confrontation would work because then me and my father uhm and it was him and his wife and a non-biased person, and when I say non-biased, I mean whatever, which is another aunt and, was there, and we did this whole confrontation thing and then they pull out a Koran and you know when they do that then I really, I really get mad.

F: It's not fair.

M: It's not right, it's not right you know what I mean. I, I don't believe in, touch on the Koran and and you know things like that. I mean what is that. But in any case I went with it because I have got nothing to hide and they open it up in the middle of the Koran and they said no you know you have to put your hands on the Koran and say you know whether you are telling the truth or not, so I got up and they looked at me where are you going. I said I am going to make wudhu [ablution], you want me to touch on the Koran. I am going to make my own law. I went I made my wudhu, I came back and I did everything then they pass the Koran to him for what must I do this? Why couldn't he do it. Eventually ...[inaudible] without ...[inaudible] or whatever, he goes and he touches on the Koran and he says that he, it didn't happen. Now, I mean really now. So now again everyone is you know thinking that it's a lie.

F: Ja.

M: Honestly I think in my mind deep down, that woman knows, my aunty knows, that I am not lying. She knows it. She knows it.

F: Mmmm.

M: I just don't think she will ever be able to accept it.

F: Ja.

M: She does know it.

F: It's hard, it's a hard thing to accept, especially knowing you have kids in the house with someone who you do suspect.

M: Exactly and this is what the family said as well. Ja he has been around all the young girls and they asked all the young girls if he has done it to them and whatever, but they all say he hasn't and they are all comfortable with him and

whatever. But in that whole thing while everyone was arguing amongst each other. I asked him why me? Why not my sister? Why did it have to be me?? And he turned around and he said, because your sister is not a druggie. Nobody heard that but me, am I bevok? ...[laughing]

F: Shooo.

M: ...[laughing] You know what I mean. So I think that was, uhm, ...[intervened]

F: So it was him taking advantage?

M: Ja.

F: Of your, probably altered state of mind?

M: Ja it was.

F: You were vulnerable.

M: I was. Uhm but in any case, all is well, I, I did confront it, it didn't come out well, whatever but after this time around, this last rehab that I was in uhm Ocean Breeze, I was, it was over. It's like you know what, whatever, it's not to say that I have given up or anything, on, on getting the truth, but just maybe believing that it will come out on its own.

F: Okay.

M: It will come out on its own.

F: And if they come it's absolutely fine, we will handle that too.

M: ...[laughing]

F: ...[laughing] I guess that that also to do with uhm peace hey. Like peace of mind and being at peace with yourself uhm but for me it sounds like it's all part and parcel of self-acceptance, because that is a part of you to.

M: Definitely.

F: Okay.

M: Definitely, you see this, this thing, this specific thing is the one thing in my life that has never allowed me to move on, it's what keeps me going back and it, it

holds me back as well, you know what I mean. And I got to a point in my life where if I didn't stop I was going to die. And that was just it and even though it looks I wanted to die and I may have thought to myself then I want to die, or try and make everyone else also believe that I wanted to die. I don't think that my spirit was ready to die ...[laughing] you know what I mean.

F: Sure.

M: I didn't have that. I was tired of life yes, I was tired of the way I was living, I was tired of everything, I was tired of the fact that I could not stop drugs. And ja, the only way eventually when my brain started operating was the only way you are going to you know, stop doing drugs is if you stop. ...[laughing] You know what I mean, so I, ja. Ja.

F: Okay I would like us to talk a little bit about that process but I think you brought up one of the things that stood out in, in your stories, you spoke a lot about death, uhm and about this consistent death wish. Uhm that you carried, uhm you spoke about, uhm what, you know, life threatening situations, you know you would say it and then there would be something else, but there was always something and to be quite honest the lifestyle was very threatening to, to your life, but you, you had formally spoke about a death wish and, and I think what you have just said now was, as, as I was reading that, I thought to myself, despite, there is a place where you say you felt like you were constantly chasing death, uhm and yet it just never came to you. and I questioned that and I wondered, there was a part of you that just seemed so hungry to live despite this death wish and I thought that was something ...[intervened]

M: ...[laughing]

F: A conflict between the two.

M: Yes ...[laughing] yes. Ja uhm I don't know, I, I guess that is why today I sit here thinking I have got a very big purpose out there. I, I think that is, that is the thing, when I say chasing death, it was like, okay it's going to sound very weird but, you know while I was cutting myself, I, I would cut but I would not cut so deep so that I, because I mean, it's simple you just go deeper ...[laughing] and you will die. But I cut a lot so that I can bleed a lot as well but you know then

maybe I will die by accident and then maybe I wouldn't go to Jahannam because ...[laughing] I didn't kill myself. It was an accident ...[laughing]

F: Mmmm.

M: So, so that was a very stupid belief of mine, uhm which is why I didn't hang myself or why I didn't through myself in front of, off a building or whatever and I lived that life where if it happens, good. If it doesn't it doesn't, like shit okay but also anyway.

F: Okay.

M: So I don't know if I answered your question or?

F: It's not a question it was just a reflection.

M: Oh.

F: ...[laughing]

M: Oh ...[laughing]

F: But that's wonderful because you, earlier you did, I was, I was thinking about it and you just said now, you just said like earlier that, uhm I was meant to be alive you know and the interesting thing that you also said now, is, you spoke about faith, uhm you said that in the, in your whole uhm journey through, because your journey was sort of in between addiction and recovery for a very long time, you know it was like this war, this tug of war between the two. Uhm and along the way you said that you have lost your faith. And just now when you were discussing this idea of a death wish and that needing to live, you brought faith into that.

M: Yes.

F: So I was just wondering did you, did you really feel like you really lost your faith, did it every really leave you?

M: Uhm I would say, very deep rooted.

F: Right.

M: It was there. And the reason I say that is because I was, I was conscious all the time, uhm about, like the Kalima, okay let's, let's do this, I converted to Christianity.

F: Okay.

M: As in I went and got myself baptised and I did the whole going to church, reading the bible, everything kind of thing, while I was in Noupoot.

F: Yes.

M: Which is a Christian institution.

F: That's what I wanted to ask you. Okay so that's ...[intervened]

M: It was a Christian institution. And that influenced me into going into that.

F: A rehab institution?

M: Yes.

F: Okay.

M: But prior to that, I was into skulls and I had this firm belief that I am an atheist and I don't believe in anything and I would, you know I was, I was very young then. When I went to Noupoot I was 16 I think. So I was, I was very young you know and I didn't know what I believe anymore. I didn't have that upbringing of going to Madrassa and you know having a Muslim family and friends around all the time or whatever. So I grew up non-religious. Uhm but I knew the Kalimas [Islamic prayers], okay, so even though I was Christian in Noupoot, when I went to bed at night in my head, like very far in my head, before I slept I was reading I was reading my Kalimas [Islamic prayers].

F: Okay. Like an automatic thing.

M: Ja. Uhm even when I was, you know out there on the streets or whatever, surah Fathiya [a fundamental prayer in Islam] was always with me. It was like it was, it was there. But I would fight it myself. Uhm, ...[laughing] so, so I wouldn't say, I would say I was fighting my faith. I would say that, I was fighting it. But I know it was there.

F: So you are saying fighting not to believe?

M: Ja, ja.

F: What purpose was that.

M: No idea. And I would say, I would say I was very angry at my creator.

F: Okay.

M: For a very long time.

F: Right.

M: I would feel why? I am such a good person, with a very good heart, I help helpless animals ...[laughing] and people whenever I see them, I do these things, why are you doing this to me. Why am I a broken person. What is missing inside of me. You know things like that and it's, it's, it was very uhm ooh it's stopped.

F: ...[Laughing] it's fine.

M: Ja when it came to that I was, I was really very angry. I guess I felt I didn't deserve it. But I think as you get older and as you, we now live the life we live, you realise that you had choices and uhm it is my choices that got me to where I was. So I, I have really got no one to blame. Except myself and that's the way it is.

F: So taking responsibility.

M: You have to. You have to.

F: Mmmm.

F: I mean you can't hold anybody else accountable for your actions. You can't. you can't say the Devil made me do it ...[laughing]. You can't, you just can't and uhm, ja.

F: Okay what is your relationship with God now, what's it like.

M: You see I have slacked a hell of a lot. And uhm that feelings of guilt that I told you that's very bad, I am in that space right now, but I would not say guilt that will drive me you know back, I am not talking about you know the type of guilt where I feel guilty for the things I did and you know, the type of guilt is present,

it is what I am doing right now. Missing my daily prayers. That is my guilt at the moment and that is my, my current battle, it's you know I came back and I was doing so well, I would come into the office and pray my salaah [Islamic prayers], go to the Mosque and pray my salaah, get home and pray and, and I am lacking in that and it's, it's terrible and I feel terrible about it. I mean like today, I went home and I slept, I didn't read my Door, it's Juma today. Do you know what I mean? And it's been happening for the past three weeks, or four weeks where I go home and I say okay you know what I know I am tired but let me read first and then sleep. You know but then I just put myself down on the bed for five minutes waiting for the bathroom and I am gone. And that's no excuse because I could come here and I could come and read, but I don't. So, so my current battle is there.

F: Okay so that's, that's what like maybe the actual practice but I think faith goes deeper than that.

M: Yes.

F: So in terms of, are you still running away from your faith?

M: No.

F: Do you find you are more connected.

M: Ja.

F: I think the question I am actually trying to ask is, do you think that faith has played an important role in your recovery?

M: Ja definitely. Definitely. I should not be alive to today, and there is obviously a higher power if you want to talk in those terms, there is a higher power that was looking out for me.

F: Okay.

M: There was something protecting me all along. There was, yoh, I was protected. And it was not a person. It really wasn't a person. And looking back at it now, I would say definitely. That is why I feel that there is a, a very big purpose for my life. There is something that should happen in my life at some stage. I am not going to chase it, because I don't know what it is. But something is going

to happen in my life where I will realise why I am alive you know. Why, why I kept going, what I kept fighting for because I mean, honestly at that time I had nothing to fight for, you know what I am saying, there was nothing to fight for, there was no family, there was no, nothing, there was absolutely nothing, why did I fight. You understand so, one day, I don't have that answer. So one day I will have that answer.

F: So there is an element of hope there, it sounds to me like the hope to find your purpose.

M: Mmmm.

F: The hope to live for something bigger?

M: Ja. You see I, I always said that my purpose you know is to help people or even animals, just help. Just, just you know to offer myself to, to some greater good you know, and uhm I think it is still that. I definitely think it's still that because I, I know I can help a lot of people and do a lot of things, in people's lives you know to impact them in some positive way. But like I said I am not chasing it.

F: Okay.

M: I am not going to chase it. It will come.

F: When we first met you said your biggest fear was whenever you tried to help someone, uhm it works against you.

M: Exactly. That's why I said I am not chasing it.

F: Okay.

M: It will come.

F: What sort of instances has that, like have you experienced in that way?

M: Ahhh, okay, I ended up, look when I, when I came clean there was a time where I really did want to come clean. And I did come clean, uhm for a year and half. And in that year and half I was helping drug addicts.

F: Okay. That you knew of?

M: In Kimberly.

F: Okay.

M: Where I am from.

F: From the rehab.

M: No no, no, where I am from. So we, I joined this group of people who were starting up a rehab and who wanted to do interventions and help the drug addicts in Kimberly and get the drugs off the streets and all that jazz and I ended up back there.

F: Okay.

M: ...[laughing] I got uhh to emotional. Way too emotional and too familiar again with you know, because I mean we actually went to the drug dealers.

F: Mmmm

M: And we stood in front of them and we protested in front of their houses and like while everybody is protesting in front of this bra's house I am thinking yussie, I should be in there with a fucking lolly and a lighter now busy chuffing ...[laughing]

F: Mmmm.

M: So those are the things that came back to me and uhm eventually I relapsed. I couldn't. And uhm the one guy that I was trying to help is the guy that I relapsed with and then when I relapsed with him, I married him.

F: Uhhh I was wondering about him.

M: Ja.

F: Okay.

M: I married him. I didn't like him. He was annoying, but I married him.

F: Mmmm ...[laughing]

M: I was very high when I got married. Extremely high.

F: You were high when you got married ...[laughing]

M: Ja.

F: When you said I do?

M: No I didn't even say I do.

F: Oh okay.

M: It was a case of dude let just get married. Okay. And it happened. Like just like that he went to the Malana, to the Mosque and everything. My father did the thing over the phone kind of thing and uhm while he was at the mosque I was in the house busy smoking and he picked up the phone and he is like, so you are my wife now. And I am like ohh shit, okay.

F: ...[laughing] okay.

M: Bring me the bag. So he had to go and buy a lot of drugs. And we drugged it up and, I know that I took a lot of Tipolene that night, the night that we got married, I think it was about 13 tablets or something that I took of Tripolene. Oh my God. I think I was out for about four or five days.

F: Wow.

M: My neighbour said to me ...[laughing], I thought you guys were honeymooning ...[laughing]. Like no, I ...[laughing] was fucked ...[laughing]

F: Oh.

M: I think I realised because he was sleeping already, and I was so high man, I was like really high.

F: Mmmm.

M: And then I think at that moment and I was alone because he was sleeping so I was alone and being alone in my head, yoh it was the worst thing ever. You couldn't be alone. If I was alone I had to be on the move, I couldn't sit in one place on my own. I would go absolutely insane. And I did and I took the Tripolenes I think because I realised shit I just, I just married this man, what the fuck is wrong with me ...[laughing]

F: Mmmm.

M: And ja.

F: I was wondering about that because I know you had said his, his parents even paid you off to leave.

M: No, that was the boyfriend before him.

F: Not the one you married? Okay this one that you married, it was also the one you went for rehab with?

M: No, that's the boyfriend.

M: No that's the boyfriend. Okay.

M: Before. I think there is maybe just a small part about the guy that I married.

F: Okay.

M: Because he didn't mean much to me. But the guy I speak a lot about, that I went for Ibergame with, whose parents paid me to go to PE and ja whose parents had me arrested and whose parents absolutely hated me.

F: Ja.

M: And thought I put him on drugs but okay in any case. He meant a lot to me. He really meant a lot to me. And when I was in Aurora rehab in Bloemfontein I spent a lot of ...[laughing] a lot of time in a lot of rehabs, in and out. So in Aurora, it was it was I think just before my birthday or on my birthday I found out I was pregnant. With his child.

F: The boyfriend?

M: The boyfriend and I was happy and everything and I told him and I don't think his parents were very happy about it, obviously not. But then when I left rehab like the day that I left, the day that I was taken out and I went home, the next morning three o'clock or around there, I miscarried. So. That was sad.

F: I can image.

M: I was very sad.

F: Mmmm what did it mean knowing that you were pregnant, or expecting life?

M: It was, I was really happy and excited about it, uhm but I would not have been right because mostly the, the, the first feeling it brought up for me and it is going

to sound really shitty, but the first feeling that it brought up for me, was now his parents can't break us apart.

F: Mmmm.

M: So, so it's a shitting thing to say, and a shitty thing to feel I mean I obviously wasn't thinking about you know the child or whatever, I was thinking about myself first wanting to be with him. So it was a very selfish thing to think and feel.

F: And how did he feel?

M: He said he was happy but I don't know.

F: Okay.

M: But ja. We broke up and I went back onto drugs ...[laughing]

F: Mmmm.

M: So ja. I don't deal very well with uhm, how can I say, like loss or emotional pain and all that jazz. The thing is uhm, I was still okay you know uhm, I was still okay until my cats died. One cat. When Leo died that is when I went bevok, because, but they injected me with Valium, the doctor.

F: Mmmm that was during your, one of your recovery episodes hey.

M: Ja, ja. It's the same one I am talking about. It's the same period.

F: Okay. Ja.

M: There is only one period of real recovery, it was in that one, one and a half years.

F: What does that mean, real recovery?

M: Real recovery. When I was actually being serious about being in recovery.

F: Okay.

M: The others was because I was forced to go.

F: Okay.

M: Or because I just wanted a break, or I had no other way out or you know.

F: Out of maybe a legal situation?

M: No out of just, my own life, like I was tired, I could not go on anymore and I wanted food, I was hungry ...[laughing] I was a very manipulative person. I was, I was very very manipulative, it's scary to think actually how, how good I was at uhm, don't look at me like that, you are looking at me like, okay, anyway.

F: No like what?

M: I don't know.

F: I, I didn't realise my look changed? So?

M: Ja your look changed.

F: In what way?

M: I don't know.

F: ...[laughing]

M: I have no idea but it felt weird ...[laughing]

F: ...[laughing] okay apologies if I made you feel weird.

M: No, no no. But I was definitely ja, so real recovery, means when I was, when I was serious about it. When I really wanted to do it.

F: Okay.

M: When I really wanted to start life and things.

F: So you are saying the previous episodes were about pleasing your mom because she is forcing you to go or?

M: No. No I was too uhm I was too bitter and too selfish to care about all of that. It was all about myself, I was tired.

F: Okay.

M: I wanted a break.

F: From the streets.

- M: Ja. Rehab was the best bet, besides you get, it's so much easier to get drugs in rehab.
- F: That's what I was going to ask now. So because I was wondering, you were tired and you needed a meal so maybe you, the rehab was to your benefit in that sense you know ...[intervened]
- M: Mmmm but there was still drugs there.
- F: That's what I was going to say. Then what happened to the with, were you able to sustain the program or?
- M: Ja everything, look I, are you asking that question because you are under the, uhm ...[intervened]
- F: Assumption.
- M: Assumption that uhh people cannot eat on drugs?
- F: No, no , no.
- M: Oh.
- F: Let me clarify what I am saying here. When you go into rehab, yes there is food and there is shelter and that's what, it sounds like you were wanting at the time so that you agreed to go. Uhm but ...[intervened]
- M: And a different scene and ...[laughing]
- F: Okay. But in addition to that, it also means that you were going to go through withdrawal symptoms and that sort of thing? Isn't it? Or what was, what was rehab like, was it a holiday or was it like a rehab?
- M: Well look Noupport was a total fuck up. That one I had no choice, I was under the, I was under age, so I had no choice. I had to go.
- F: Is it your mom who said you had to do it?
- M: Well the law or my mother. So there wasn't much of a choice there. Okay alright. Uhm so that was, that was bad.
- F: It was a long commitment, you said you were there for about a year?

- M: It was a year.
- F: A year. Okay.
- M: It was, yoh it was hectic being there, but uhm, ag I made it through man. But the others it was very easy to get drugs inside. Really absolutely easy.
- F: Wow.
- M: So the other one I was an outpatient, so obviously I drugged before I go, drugged when I come out just you know, but that time I was still living at home.
- F: Okay.
- M: It's only the last few where I was taken off the street. Uhm and again ja, TC I did twice.
- F: Can you just, what is TC stand for?
- M: Uhh Therapeutic Community, it's a place in memorial park.
- F: Okay.
- M: So that program I did twice. And I was expelled twice.
- F: Okay ...[laughing]
- M: ...[laughing]
- F: You sound like at school. I was expelled from school ...[laughing].
- M: Ja, no no really they expel people. The first time I was expelled because I was busy with a guy, which was the MOD, the mayor.
- F: Okay.
- M: Uhm and the second time I was expelled because they couldn't help me.
- F: What does that mean?
- M: ...[Laughing] exactly.
- F: A rehab saying that.
- M: Oh I must tell you, okay can we go smoke?

R: Oh yes ja.

M: I must tell you.

F: I will have a loo break while you have a smoke if that's okay.

M: Are you going to stop the recording. Or you can just leave it for a moment of silence ...[laughing]

F: I think that that's absolutely fine. I am going to leave my stuff there is that fine.

M: Ja it's fine I will just lock up. Uhm I will be just[long silence]. Sorry I am jumping a lot now.

F: No not at all.

M: I am going to lock us in because I promise you people knock and just open.

F: Oh ...[laughing] that fine.

M: Why do you even knock.

F: I don't know when last I saw a smoker on the ...[inaudible] really like, now that I remember that is a cigarette and back in the day, like my uncles were ...[inaudible] Stuyvesant.

M: Is it, ...[laughing] Courtley.

F: Yes.

M: Rothmans.

R: Ja those are the in ones.

M: I am totally not in.

F: Totally not in?

M: I am not in.

F: Why, why ...[inaudible]

M: I don't like being in. ...[laughing]

F: Standing out ...[laughing]

M: Ja.

F: Ja.

M: So I am saving this one for you ...[laughing].

F: Okay.

M: TC ...[intervened]

F: ...[Laughing] you are saving it for me.

M: Ja, yes you are going to love it. I think you are really going to love it.

F: Okay.

M: So they have certain outcomes, they don't call it punishments they call it outcomes. Right.

F: Oh okay.

M: And what they do is, okay so you have your black bin, so you have your, I can't remember the actual names of it, but it's where you sit in front of a wall and you stare at it and you reflect. Ja.

F: A naughty corner for the kids.

M: Ja. You have uhm, your alilimob which is, you are on your elbows and your knees on concrete for be it half a day or so. Then you have waking up at like two o'clock in the morning to totally, they call it break down the house, which mean you literally from the ceilings down to the floor to the things in the tiles, to the everting.

F: What?

M: You clean it.

F: Oh wow.

M: And you reflect while you are doing that. Uhm this is from two o'clock in the morning. You are woken up from your sleep and you do that.

F: Okay.

M: Uhm and they have quite a few other outcomes like uhm ex-con, so you will wear this stupid board that says you are ex-con, which no one can speak to you, and you have your own table where you get your own food and you sit and you eat there like a total outcast. Or you get homeless where you don't get a bed, you don't get a thing, you get a bowl that you use as your toilet, you wash it yourself and everything and you use it as your plate.

F: Wow.

M: Ja.

F: Okay then.

M: In any case I was what they called a special case where, okay they say everyone has their own treatment plan. So not everybody will be dealt with in the same way.

F: Okay.

M: They never ever gave me outcomes like that because they, in their mind they didn't know how to handle me because I was a cutter and I was suicidal and all that jazz, and to me, if I think about it now, as an institute you are supposed to be well equipped with things like this because it's common in, in drug abuse and stuff. In any case, uhm, one time, I can't remember what the hell I did but they put on that thing where I had to sit and stare at a wall. And reflect. Now to me making me clean a bin and alilimbo and all that other hard shit is the easiest things to do. Putting me on a fricken wall to reflect on my life is the worst thing you can do to me. So obviously I am looking around on the floor, counting the letters in the creed that is written on the wall, going absolutely insane, and then I find a nail. What the hell am I going to do with a nail. So I start digging and digging and scratching and drawing on the wall, I am bored ...[laughing]. Eventually I don't know what happened and then, okay then you have to write at the end of the night, everything you reflected on and all that jazz.

F: Okay.

M: I think I went absolutely insane because then the one day I just got up, I went to the toilet, now in the toilet in the girls toilet, you know those squeegees, that little balls that you put in water and then it becomes like ...[intervened]

F: Oh ja ja.

M: You know all that colourful stuff. So we had that in a bowl, so I threw the bowl on the floor because now I am getting tired of this stupid nail, it's like annoying me, so I end up cutting myself on my thigh. And they walked in because obviously they heard the bowl break, so they walked in and they found me sitting on the floor cutting on my thigh and everything and the director sends me for psychological evaluation. Now he says to my parents, if the psychological evaluation comes back and says there is nothing wrong with this child, then I will take her back and I will punish her in this, this way and she will get real program and everything because then she is just being bedroging us and what have you, bullshitting us and all that jazz. And they said fine. So I went to Joburg Gen or whatever and I got my psychological uhh evaluation which came back as borderline personality disorder and we went back to him and said look here so okay she has been diagnosed with something, she has got borderline personality disorder. And he throws a sign and says this is bullshit, all drug addict has border line personality disorder.

F: Shoo.

M: So I think at that stage my parents both saw this man was up to shit so fuck this shit. And took me out there.

F: Okay.

M: So okay look, I, I am not really very clued up I think obviously you know a lot more about borderline personality disorder. I mean you have studied that right. I have no idea what that is, to me you are basically telling me I am borderline schizophrenic.

F: ...[laughing]

M: That is what I thought. That's what I thought, all my life because this woman is explaining it to me and she is telling me basically you have got one foot in schizophrenia and you have got another foot on normal.

F: No.

M: So I all my life, I am thinking well for, since then, I am thinking to myself, holly shit, so is this why I forget a lot of things that I do, because you know you like read on schizophrenia and things like that, so I basically bullshitted myself all along, not realising that okay, the amount of drugs I have done in my life and uhm the fact that somethings your brain just decides to push it to the back, your brain decides it doesn't want to remember it, or whatever, you know, that is why I have forgotten, not because I am fucken mentally sick.

F: No.

M: You know what I mean. So so that is what happened to me.

F: Shoo that's a huge thing to be carrying with you.

M: Exactly, and it's only basically in this last year that I realised that ever since then until now, I have been bullshitting myself thinking that there is something wrong with me. When there is absolutely nothing wrong with me. Ibogaine fixed me, Ibogaine made me realise that it was my brain that didn't want all that information. That you know. I didn't forget all that shit because I am sick. And that is what I was believing all the time. I thought I was sick, I, I didn't know what the hell. They put me on antidepressants and I was just becoming aggressive and it was like what the hell. Am I going to be a drug addict for the rest of my life and now I need to take antidepressants, fuck that shit I left the shit, I left it. They had me on, Lorial I think it is, uhm schedule 7 I think.

F: Mmmm yes it's insane. Now. ...[intervened]

M: Why?

F: ...[Laughing] I think uh, ja I think it is so, you have to be so cautious the way that you give a diagnosis.

M: Exactly, you don't tell someone who is normal that they are sick.

F: ...[Laughing] and uhm I think what is important ...[laughing] here, is schizophrenia is like on a whole different level.

M: Exactly.

F: So even if it is border line, it's not on the same category. Uhm so like if you just think about schizophrenia.

M: ...[laughing]

F: Its actually like, if you hear voices and you have hallucinations and stuff and then you are up that alley right.

M: But you see the thing is when you , when you are suffering with sleep deprivation, dehydration, flippen all that shit.

F: Yes. Exactly. You start hallucinating and hearing things.

M: Ja and its circumstantial. Exactly.

F: Not because of ...[intervened]

M: Exactly.

F: Right.

M: So all of that knowing that okay I have experienced all of that and whatever, the minute someone says to me, schizophrenia, what am I going to listen to. What am I going to think. You ask me do you hear voices? Fuck yes I hear voices, do you hallucinate, ja shit, I see shit that is not that is not there because I am high and I am hallucinating and I have been awake for fucking seven days or whatever, but that is why, whenever they wanted to send me too a psychologists or psychiatrists or whatever I would refuse. Because the people are reading from a book. I mean did that woman fucking ask me is it the drugs making you see things or whatever. Sorry I am swearing a lot.

F: That's absolutely fine.

M: Because this is, it's really it's something that really angered me because for a very long time, I thought I was sick.

F: Mmmm.

M: I really, I really thought I was sick, I would stay away from people, I would tell people please don't come into my life I am not okay in my head. I believed it.

F: Ja it's a scary thing to do.

M: I believed it, I believed that I could become another person. I gave myself names.

F: Shoo.

M: I gave myself names, I literally created this different personalities all on my own. Because of someone telling me that I am border line. I am not there is nothing wrong with me. I was on drugs. I was a broken up person, empty, not sick. So ja, I told you you would love this one ...[laughing]

F: ...[laughing] that's scary, its, its, so important to thoroughly assess before dishing out a diagnosis.

M: Exactly.

F: You know that is drastic and and I think it is like, you know people take for granted the impact it has on a person's life, I mean look how many years you carried that with you? You know that's kak ...[laughing].

M: Ja. It is and I think it is literally maybe this year or towards the end of last year that I, I, I don't know how I just, I think I was reading a lot on it as well because I think it got to a point where I started now trying to figure out who I am and I got a point where I, I was sick of everybody else telling me who the fuck I am or what is going on in my life or this and this and that and that. So I decided to do it myself.

F: That's awesome.

M: And that is where I discovered you know what there is absolutely nothing wrong with me. There is, and I swear I wanted to find that woman and I wanted to sort her out.

F: Mmmm. ...[laughing]

M: No really, I, it got bad man. It got to a point where I, I literally would forget, like people would tell me, you were at this and this place doing such and such a

thing and I had absolutely no, absolutely no memory of it, and that is when the belief got stronger that okay I am sick, I am sick, what the fuck.

F: Yes.

M: And eventually I just realised it's the drugs. I am taking too much drugs. It's called a blackout.

F: Ja, ja.

M: It's you know.

F: Ja. Well thumbs up to you for coming to that realisation on your own. You said it was in a process of deciding to uhm, decide for yourself who you are and ...[inaudible]

M: Ja.

F: And that makes me think of uhm, when, you said when your granny passed you know as you spoke about your granny passing and this was even before the cat situation, uhm but it almost looked so detached, like she passed away, you know, and then eventually I know it did hit when Leo passed away, but the thing that you also said there was if only she could see me now. And that's, that has now been ringing in my head, as you say I decided to define myself. If she could see you now, what would she see that is different? Who would she be seeing? What would she see?

M: She would be seeing her baby again. She would. I was a very loveable person. Uhm, ja, I was uhm, I had emotion, I had sympathy, I had empathy, I had all those things, and uhm as the years went by with the drugging and all that jazz, I lost everything. I was a cold-hearted bitter flippen shell.

F: Mmmm.

M: And uhm that's, that's what she, she hated the most, well not hated but that is what she, she didn't want to see that person. She wanted to see that lovable person, that affectionate person ...[inaudible] like before I would love to have a hug and a you know hold me and cuddle with me and stuff like that but while I was drugging, it's like don't, don't touch me, it's annoying. Don't come close to

me it's annoying, get out of my space, come on! You know. So uhm, all that is back. All that is back.

F: So what would she now?

M: She would see me. She would see her baby, she would, she would see all that, that love, that warmth, her love, her warmth inside of me again. She was a very uhh, she was a very, she was filled with love. She had too much love.

F: ...[laughing]

M: And I always say that, I, I say I have so much love inside of me and no one to frikken give it to. You know talking now about a spouse or whatever. And uhm, ja, huh. What?

F: ...[laughing]

M: Where did I go? ...[laughing]

F: ...[laughing] Yes, you are thinking of a memory.

M: Ja. I was just thinking about my grandmother.

F: Mmmm.

M: I miss her a lot.

F: Mmmm.

M: I wasn't allowed at her Mayet [funeral].

F: Mmmm that was sad I read that. That was quite unfair. Would you have gone through?

M: I was on my way to the Mayet, but as we got closer to the house I jumped out of the car. But luckily I did that. It's a good thing I did that, I mean I would have got there and it would have just been discomfort and disease, more disease for people and for myself as well and uhh I would not have wanted that. They just lost their mother, you know I am talking about my mom.

F: Ja. What made you jump out of the car?

M: I have no idea. I guess I just couldn't face it.

- F: Okay.
- M: I couldn't. I wish I was normal before she went, I wish she went when I was like this.
- F: Mmmm
- M: Not like I was. But things happen.
- F: Do you think she would be able to look at you with pride?
- M: Definitely, if she saw me today, definitely. I mean I have never been this determined and this focussed and you know, like, like I am now. Uhm I am actually amazed no one knocked at this door yet.
- F: Mmmm it seems like they listen to you when you talk hey?
- M: They actually do.
- F: Ja.
- M: It's crazy.
- F: Shows how much respect people have for you which sound quite different to your story and your people in your life during that time.
- M: Definitely. You know what it's a complete 360. It's, it's unreal. It is a complete 360. I would never, back then, I never thought I would have this much respect and this much authority so to speak and this much uhm how can I say, like control over things. I had absolutely no control over my life, it was just like uhhh uhhh everywhere. And now there is just so much control it's like are we going out tonight or whatever, no I have go to work tomorrow, or whatever you know and if I do go out can I please go home I have go to work in the morning. And it's not who I was, I would go out and fricken, I would go to work smashed, fricken come back you know, like this is like then when I was working at BMW, I would go out from the Thursday until the Monday and then fricken Friday, Saturday, I am fucked at work and Monday I am also screwed at work, I will go sleep Monday night, back to normal by Wednesday and then Thursday night go screw it up again. You know so it's a complete 360 that I have taken.
- F: Mmmm that's amazing and that's what your granny would be seeing.

- M: Oh by the way I got your messages now when I was sitting outside.
- F: ...[laughing]
- M: ...[laughing]
- F: That's okay.
- M: Like oh ja.
- F: That's okay.
- M: Oh ja I know you are here, I am talking to you. ...[laughing]
- F: Ja.
- M: Or was I talking to myself ...[laughing] what is going on. ...[laughing]
- F: That's okay.
- M: Schizophrenia. ...[laughing]
- F: ...[laughing] No, no, no let's not even play about that.
- M: Oh my God. What is borderline? Tell me what is borderline?
- F: Uhm, I am not going to tell you everything because I think you should read about it, so you can understand it.
- M: Okay.
- F: Buts its, its more related to mood disorders. So mood disorders particularly, you get bipolar.
- M: Ja.
- F: And then you get depression, so it has to do with more mood disorders and I can see why she gave you that diagnosis, because uhm there is incredible, incredibly high suicidal ideation, or suicidal attempts uhm, the self-harm, that's also characteristic of borderline, and then the intense depression that's why they gave you antidepressants.
- M: So she wasn't lying.
- F: No.

M: But she should not have said schizophrenia.

F: I don't know how that came into the ...[intervened]

M: She said and her words were "you are standing on a fence or on a wall with one foot in schizophrenia and the other foot on normal. That's why you are borderline".

F: Look also the other characteristics, honestly schizophrenia is not a personality disorder, borderline is. So that is why remember you spoke about things like being very manipulative, that's also possibly a characteristic why she said borderline.

M: Okay. Ja.

F: That's a characteristic of someone who has got, so you did represent the characteristics of a borderline and that's a personality disorder, schizophrenia isn't a personality disorder.

M: Oh.

F: So you understand what I am saying.

M: Ja.

F: That's why I don't understand why she threw that, yes you may at times, sometimes our depression can be so intense and even more so when it is mixed with a substance that we can even, or the individual can even go into psychosis and that is when you may be delusional or hallucinate and that sort of thing.

M: Oh ja.

F: But it's that mixture of the intense depression, the chemical reaction which is now worsen by the drugs. Do you understand.

M: Ja.

F: That would have been a nice way of explaining it to you.

M: That would have been a better way.

F: ...[laughing] so I understand that diagnosis but no, you can't put the two together.

- M: Gee whizz.
- F: Ja. But in terms of a treatment she was not giving you antipsychotics which is something you would give to someone who maybe had schizophrenia, she was giving you antidepressants, so in terms of the treatment that was ...[inaudible]
- M: Spot on.
- F: Fair treatment. Ja and that was just to help you regulate your emotions.
- M: Oh okay ja, but it didn't work.
- F: But it would not work if you continued with the drugs.
- M: Oh ja.
- F: It wouldn't work. So ...[intervened]
- M: Because I know, I know uhm because my, my boyfriend at that time actually said to me, because there was days that I wouldn't take it, there was times that I just wouldn't take it.
- F: That's the other problem.
- M: And he would say to me you know when you don't take these things you are a calm person, I can speak to you.
- F: Okay.
- M: But when you do take these things you are aggressive and you want to bite my head off.
- F: Mmmm.
- M: That's what he said and then ...[intervened]
- F: That's interesting.
- M: They had me on that antidepressant and then something with a Q which is a mood stabiliser they told me.
- F: Ja.
- M: So I had to take them both because I told them look the shit is making me aggressive, so they put me on the mood stabiliser as well.

F: And how such medication works is you only really feel the effects after two weeks at minimum.

M: Oh.

F: And two week of consistently taking it.

M: Ja.

F: Otherwise you won't, that's why the problem is a lot of people just decide to stop it because I am taking it for three days instead of doing the opposite.

M: Ja.

F: Remember if there are highs and lows it's because it's trying to regulate your hormones.

M: Oh okay ja.

F: The balance so that's why consistent use and you only feel it after the two weeks at minimum.

M: Well I will never touch that stuff again.

F: ...[laughing] I think you are in a good place and also I think uhm, like you spoke about, uhm you brought up the idea of control and you were just saying how much more in control you feel now and you are right it, it almost sounded like you were on this continuous rollercoaster uhm you know as you were moving through your journey, and but as you were going through it, I got the feeling like yes it was chaotic but, you were searching for control but you weren't getting, to me at least, and you can correct me if I am wrong, it wasn't a control that you were hoping for. So you started exercising control in ways like uhm, I allowed him to continue hitting me, that was me allowing it, making it that you can hit me now.

M: Yes, yes.

F: You can continue. Or uhm the control of I was silently killing him, I decided that this is how I will fight this war.

M: Yes.

- F: Do you get what I am saying.
- M: I, I get what you are saying, its spot on ja. Because its control that I was, that I was wanting, I am a very controlling person. Oh my God I just said that.
- F: ...[laughing] I am not in any way insinuating that ...[laughing]
- M: No but its, its true because look a lot of people have said to me as well, you are very controlling person and maybe that's the problem. And I am like but I am not a controlling person, if he wants to go out let him go out kind of thing you know, but now that I am thinking about on, on complete different scale, shit I am actually a controlling person. I am, I do want control sometimes, it's like it's better to take things into your own hands and let it play out that way, that ...[intervened]
- F: I can completely understand why you would want to be in control, considering where you have come from, I can totally understand that and I think it makes it tricky now to be able to know whether you are being excessively in control where it might be stepping on someone else's toes, versus trying to keep that control because for so long you didn't have that control.
- M: Exactly ja.
- F: So ...[inaudible]
- M: But no I think I am doing good.
- F: Ja for sure.
- M: I am doing good.
- F: Mmmm. Uhm with uhm, I wondered about the relationships because they all had, they were all similar, or the same, just with different individuals.
- M: Ja ...[laughing] Yes. ...[laughing]
- F: ...[laughing] Uhm but the nature of them just seemed.
- M: Definitely.
- F: Ja. Uhm I was wondering what, I almost got the feeling that you were looking for something each time you went into a relationship? Because you went in

and the same pattern played and then you went in and the same pattern played and I am just wondering do you, was there something you were hoping for, looking for.

M: You see when I was younger I was very, I don't know, I don't know how my brain operated when I was younger, very stupidly, but I always said, because my father was abusive towards my mother, I always said, I will be in abusive relationships and I will teach all the mother fuckers a lesson. [laughing]

F: Okay ...[laughing]

M: And I did just that.

F: Okay.

M: Same thing like when I took my first line of, of coke, I took that line and I said I am going to be an addict for the rest of my life. Exactly that happened. So, ...[laughing] uhm, I don't know look, look I succeeded uhm with, when it comes to being an addict for the rest of my life, because I am addict and I will always refer to myself as an addict because I will keep reminding myself that I am an addict and its good. Its good uhm, I don't mean an active addict.

F: Mmmm a recovering one?

M: Recovering yes, an addict in recovery but it is still an addict. I am a recovering addict, I am, just putting another word in front of it doesn't make a unaddict ...[laughing]. So and I am okay with that.

F: Okay you said it is important for you to ...[intervened]

M: To remember.

F: How come?

M: Because let's say for example we are a group of friends and we decide we want to go to Truth tonight. And I forget that I am an addict, and I say okay lets go to Truth tonight, I mean don't worry I won't fall. You know I know that I used to use drugs, but I am not focussing on the fact that I am an addict and I go to Truth, oh my God, you won't see me again. You won't see me again.

F: Mmmm.

M: No one will see me again because I will go to Truth, I will for the first maybe hour or so, I will be fine, I will be think okay maybe just this once, just this once I will be fighting it, fighting it.

F: Mmmm.

M: And eventually it will be like okay, just this once, let's go, and I pop a couple of ecstasies and take a few acids and eventually find people snuffing in the toilets, now I go okay look can I have a line or, you know where is the dealer, I will buy a gram or whatever. You know and go on from there. It is one night.

F: Mmmm.

M: But if I keep that in mind, I am an addict, I am not going to go to Truth ...[laughing] because I am an addict, I cannot go to Truth and I will think about it every single day. If I go to a doctor, okay look now, right now I am going to justify a little bit because of the Tramasac that I took, but usually if I go to a doctor, the first thing I say is whatever medication you are going to give me I am an addict, I am a recovering addict, so don't give me hectic medication, and I will go no this, not that, no that. So it's, its, if I go to hospital, if I do anything, don't, don't give me Valium you know.

F: Okay.

M: Valium is very nice as well, just don't give me Valium. ...[laughing]

F: I get the feeling though when you refer to yourself as a recovering addict now, or an addict, whichever you choose now versus when you refer to yourself as an addict back then, they have very different meaning.

M: Yes.

F: Can you tell me a bit about that difference.

M: I was an active addict then.

F: Okay.

M: Active addict as in I was using and abusing drugs for a living ...[laughing]

F: Ja ...[laughing]

M: For a living ...[laughing]. I swear it was, to survive mostly than anything else, I mean how else will you survive on the streets you have to be fucked up in your brains or, to actually manage it. And now I am not an active addict.

F: Is that the only distinction?

M: Ja.

F: Between the two kinds of addicts. They sound very different to me in terms of who they are?

M: Maybe I am not giving it enough words or something.

F: Is it, is the difference really about that addict was using drugs and this addict is not using drugs?

M: Yes.

F: Okay.

M: And how that addict felt about drugs and how this addict feels about drugs.

F: How, what's the difference in the feeling?

M: I hate it. I hate the thought of it and then it was intriguing and exciting and I, I was in love with drugs and I mean in love as in my first love was cocaine.

F: I know.

M: You know.

F: You even called her a She.

M: Yes.

F: I was so interested by that.

M: Yes, yes.

F: Giving it a gender.

M: Yes of course. Because everything "She" is beautiful, I mean when we talk about you, how do we call, we call her "She" ...[laughing] You know.

F: Yes yes.

M: Uhm so ja right now, I, I fear it. I fear getting into someone's car and you know there is a chance that they pull out a CD cover and start chopping lines and the thing is it's not that I fear the drug itself, I fear what I would do and where I would end up again because you must remember it just takes one. It takes one time to go, and for me to go back it's like no. I can't go through that again. And besides me I can't put my family through it anymore. Or again.

F: Okay.

M: I cannot. Uhm that is the biggest difference now in me, is that I, I am, I am more considerate and, and I think more about them than what I did before, it was never ever about my family, because I hate my family. You know what I mean, it was a case of they were never there for me. They are the reason I am so fucked up so screw it you know. But now it is more like, and I don't know if its maturity that kicked in or if its actualisation, I don't know what it is. But whatever it is its good.

F: Okay.

M: You know to, to realise that shit happens in life. And whatever it is you need to just move forward. You need to just move forward because the more you going to dwell on it, you are not going to get anywhere. That's what I was doing all the time. I was dwelling on the fact that my uncle molested me and my family doesn't believe me, I was dwelling on, ja, shit that happened to me out there, I, I would remember the shit and it would come back and play itself in my, it would play itself in my head and you know, and yoh and now its fine. It's like there is, there is times I won't lie to you, where I will be lying in bed and things will just rush back all at once and my entire body will go on heat and I would, you know my heart will start beating and I would end up crying and then laughing and then I would go absolutely mad in my bed because of everything that happened. You see being busy all the time all day doesn't give me the chance to you know focus on anything but work and stuff, and then when you are lying in bed, then things come back to you and stuff like that and it happens and its bad. Sometimes it gets really bad, I can't sleep and I toss and I turn and I see myself going and smoking buttons and its, it's absolutely insane. But uhm I have my

counsellor and I will speak to my counsellor and I don't know he will end up flirting with me though.

F: ...[laughing] What!

M: Ja.

F: ...[laughing]

M: He will end up flirting with me and then the whole focus is gone but I mean to me its fine, it's absolutely fine because then it's gone.

F: Who is this counsellor? ...[laughing] Lets report him.

M: ...[laughing] I am not telling you ...[laughing]

F: I am just kidding, I am just kidding.

M: I am not telling you because you know him. ...[laughing]

F: Oh dear ...[laughing] okay he knows me.

M: He knows you ...[laughing]

F: Oh okay. Alright.

M: Ja and he is not here. It's over the phone.

F: I don't need to know who he is that's fine, as long as its someone that is flirting with you, no, someone that is actually apart from that, do you actually find some sort of relief after speaking with a therapist?

M: Well you see I don't see him as my counsellor or my therapist, I don't.

F: Okay.

M: I,I just, I don't know that he is there, he is clued up and everything.

F: He is a registered psychologist?

M: No.

F: Okay. So what do you mean by counsellor?

M: My what's the word the AA or NA uses, my ...[intervened]

- F: Sponsor.
- M: Sponsor or something, so he is something like that.
- F: Has he also gone through this process.
- M: Mmmm.
- F: Oh shit I know who he is ...[laughing]
- M: You know who he is. Who is he?
- F: ...[laughing]
- M: He is not from here.
- F: He is not from here.
- M: He is from there ...[laughing]
- F: He is from there.
- M: He is still there.
- F: Ja he is there.
- M: He is coming soon ...[laughing]
- F: Is he?
- M: ...[laughing]
- F: ...[laughing] Okay that might make me a bit worried now, we have to have that conversation which must not be uhm, transcribed.
- M: Ja no please not ...[laughing]
- F: Ja ...[laughing]
- M: Gosh but I like him.
- F: Did he used to be here?
- M: Uhuh.
- F: Then how does he know me?
- M: I don't even know he should know you, he knows your father.

F: Are we going to go around in circles or are we going to be straight with who he is?

M: Ja when this thing goes off.

F: Oh no it can be there but I won't say, I won't write it down, because this I am going to transcribe, I won't transcribe that part.

M: From Ocean Breeze man {name}.

F: Oh ja.

M: Yes.

F: Alright.

M: He is divorced now.

F: Okay.

M: So I am allowed to like him.

F: ...[laughing]

M: ...[laughing]

F: But then you need to change your counsellor.

M: He is not, he is not my counsellor, he is just someone like even aunty Zanie, she is not a counsellor but I feel very comfortable speaking to her.

F: That's great.

M: So I don't believe that I should give someone that I speak to a name.

F: Okay.

M: Because then I become uncomfortable, or a title.

F: Okay I get you.

M: So like if you are my boyfriend, shit I can't talk to you ...[laughing]

F: Really?

M: Mmmm.

F: Oh wow.

M: I cant. There is certain things that, but if you are my friend, then ja I can be fucken open with you, like yoh I had an awesome ...[inaudible] you know ...[laughing]

F: I get you.

M: Ja.

F: Okay.

M: So I don't know. I don't know why it's like that.

F: Okay but there is some sort of relief that comes out of that conversation?

M: Ja.

F: After a bad night like you described.

M: Ja. There is. There is.

F: I am going to change the topic because now you are going to start daydreaming.

M: Oh ...[laughing]

F: ...[laughing] So ...[intervened]

M: Did you see it coming ...[laughing]

F: About him ...[laughing]

M: ...[laughing]

F: So let me now try and recant how we got here ...[laughing]

M: ...[laughing]

F: Uhm so we were talking about bad days, so apart from having someone that you trust to talk to, uhm what, what are some of the things that you, that you find yourself doing to, you know because I get the feeling, uhm from your story that, the minute stuff got uncomfortable or something was just too intense, you found a different town or a different sport or maybe even a different relationship. I might be reading it wrong.

- M: No you are 100%. You are 100%.
- F: So, I mean how are you dealing with stuff now, that's still keeping you stable and in one place? Because that's different?
- M: Ja you see I think, I think it's, it's the fact that I am where I am. That is, that is what I am holding to. Where I was and where I am, I am holding on to that so strongly because I don't want to let it go. I feel if I let that go, I let myself go.
- F: Okay.
- M: Uhm I, I, what is basically keeping me together, that is what you are asking me right, what is holding me together, the business firstly and I know it's a bad thing. But it's, it's really keeping me together because I need to see this place prosper. Uhm between myself and my father we have put a lot into this.
- F: Okay.
- M: You know and emotionally fricken mentally, God I am going to end up someone here one day, but we have invested a lot of ourselves in this place and I need to see it prosper. I can't, I can't walk out on it. I mean although I do want a other job and it's frustrating being here, and I can say all of that, but come to me with a job, I won't take it. I, I don't know. This place has really done something for me.
- F: Mmmm.
- M: Uhm besides that also, uhm ja like I said, where I was and where I am, I am, I don't want to lose myself. Choice, it's my choice, I just want what I have ...[laughing]
- F: Right so you are loving what you have.
- M: I am I just want to move out of the house.
- F: ...[laughing] Okay.
- M: That's it.
- F: Okay.
- M: I need to move out of the house. ...[laughing]

F: Okay alright.

M: Ja. Did I answer you?

F: Uhm ja, look those are the things that I think it's almost like the, the anchor that's keeping the ship in one place ja.

M: Ja.

F: Okay uhm and as you spoke about how much you have invested uhm into this uhm business and how you see it as you want to see it prosper, you can't see yourself letting it go, I honestly saw you as that business. It's as if you are at a point in your life where you have invested so much in you, that you want to see yourself prosper.

M: Ja.

F: And you can't let yourself go. Uhm, that's just what came out for me and I think that is beautiful that you are at such a point where, ja that's why I think there is that connection between you and this business.

M: Hmmm.

F: I am sorry my mom always shouts, she says you have such a way of making me cry ...[laughing]

M: ...[laughing]

F: She says you just look at me and I start crying.

M: ...[laughing]

F: Sorry ...[laughing]. But I am very comfortable with tears.

M: Who said I am ...[laughing]

F: ...[laughing] Ja I know. ...[laughing]

M: ...[laughing] I am joking now. It is, it's very, uhm, and it's very true what you say. Sorry I don't mean to be rude, I am just, I have to just keep eyeballing that side.

F: That's not a problem. That's not a problem ...[laughing].

M: Unfortunately it, it's such a habit also.

F: Ja.

M: It's like, even if we were somewhere else, I would have been, actually what would have been happening, this phone would have been ringing the whole time.

F: And yet they are really respecting this. Isn't it, aren't they, I am amazed.

M: They do.

F: I know the first time I came to see you, there were a few barges ...[laughing]

M: ...[laughing] me too I am shocked.

F: But they really ...[intervened]

M: I didn't expect it to work.

F: ...[laughing] Well Miriam spoke so they listened.

M: ...[laughing]

F: Uhm I want, I was thinking a little bit about uhm, your process, I think I identified four rehab relapse, relapse relapse, rehab relapse, and now this is where you are. I don't know if I missed any but I actually don't think that is as important as the fact that, there were two spaces in your life, the one point five years of recovery, is a familiar number to you, there was a space in your life where it was. Now I want to take you back to that space where your first one and a half years of recovery, simply because, its, that stage was so significantly different to the other process of uhm in rehab the next minute I am already back on relapse mode.

M: Ja.

F: What was that like, just that period in your life that seems so different to the common pattern.

M: It was uncomfortable. It was very uncomfortable, uhm, but good as well, but uncomfortable. And why I say uncomfortable is because maybe my environment, so uhm, I was more, I was more fearful then, uhm, because look

there is dealers everywhere and I knew all of them and there was friends everywhere and I knew all of them.

F: Okay so you were still in the same place.

M: I was in the same place.

F: Okay.

M: Uhm but also why it was uncomfortable was because of my family. So, my family knew me as, like okay this family doesn't know jack shit about me. What they know about me is what they think they know about me. They don't know me. But my mother's family what they know about me is what they have experienced with me. So when I went to their houses, it was very uncomfortable, although they welcomed me in. I didn't feel welcome. I felt okay they are locking all their doors. They are hiding all their handbags, they still think I am going to steal their shit and go and sell it for drugs. So it was, it was, it was very uncomfortable, but I would just ignore it. Uhm, but it was there. Other than that uhm my and my mother's relationship kind of started to get better then.

F: Okay.

M: Okay, uhm so all my life up until then me and my mother had no relationship whatsoever.

F: Okay.

M: But in that time we developed something. So okay it fell apart again after I had screwed up again but this time around, I think that, if I look at it now, that point of my life, helped or basically how could I say, it was sort of the start of a relationship for me and my mother now.

F: Okay.

M: Because I mean now we don't have start from scratch. There we started from scratch and I mean I was old already I wasn't a child, you know what I am saying. So like it was a, we basically carried on from there. And we didn't have to uhh start from scratch, so I think, ja, I didn't answer you again.

F: ...[laughing] No you, no you are, you are in line with that, in the sense that what was, it was one and a half years of that was the good part, because you mentioned something was good, so I suppose it was the start of that relationship.

M: Yes, yes.

F: Uhm but there was more discomfort along the line.

M: Discomfort ja. It was, it was uncomfortable and I think also because I was not, how can I say, I really did want to do it. But clearly I didn't want to do it enough the fact that I had, you know that I relapsed. So I think, look I, honestly I, I don't know. If I am answering you now, I am answering you based on where I am at now.

F: Sure.

M: You understand. So the way I am looking at it right now is that then, if I really wanted it as much as I say I wanted it, I would not have relapsed. I would have still been clean.

F: Okay.

M: But then I thought I really wanted it, I really did.

F: Ja, so uhm I want to talk a little bit about uhm, you mentioned the discomfort came from the way that, almost like the way that you would, you continued to be looked at as the addict, as the criminal in that sense. So almost the judgement made it difficult, uhm, what is that like now? You know stigma and the judgement?

M: You see now, I don't go there. At all, I don't, I want nothing to do with that side. It's basically like, I have started a whole new life here. So there is, there is no real stigma for me right now. Except obviously when people see my arms. Then there is that thing.

F: Okay.

M: Uhm and what my father's family thinks of me I don't give two shits, not even one.

F: Okay ja.

M: ...[laughing] so ja there is nothing really, uhm and look then, right, I was working for my mother, like I am working for my father now, I was working for my mother but that was a bike shop.

F: Okay.

M: I didn't have access to money, there was no way in hell she would give me access to money or to her handbag for example or you know there was that thing, but with my father, he doesn't lock anything away and I basically run money in this place.

F: Mmmm.

M: I have got full total access to all the money here. So it's, it's a very big responsibility, it drives me absolutely insane and I did tell them before I am not comfortable because I am not saying I am going to steal anything but anything can happen, anything can go wrong, there can be a mistake and then, you know then because of, okay look but his brother, who also runs this place, what he knows about me is that I am a drug addict, or was a druggie and all that shit and I fucked up a lot and I can't be trusted and all that jazz but okay he is the one that put me in charge of the money.

F: Ja.

M: So I said to them, I said you know what if money is short or whatever, what is the first thing people are going to think, they are going to think obviously you know I have taken this money or whatever. So there has been a couple of times where the cashbook is like you know not balancing and whatever and I stress and stress but eventually I find the problem. So, uhh ja anyway that went way off topic.

F: Not at all, not at all.

M: The point of the matter is that I feel trusted, I feel very trusted and it helps, it helps a lot.

F: That's awesome. Okay that's, that's a different concept but uhm it sounds like during that time, uhm the stigma was a big challenge in, in the recovery period to me.

M: I think so, it sounds like it to me too ...[laughing]

F: ...[laughing] Okay.

M: ...[laughing]

F: ...[laughing] and, and if you think about the relapse during that period, what, what sparked it?

M: The relapse then? My cat.

F: Okay so it was Leo.

M: You see when, when Leo died, yoh it was bad hey, when Leo died was the time that, look when, when my grandmother died there was no tears, there was no nothing, no emotion, no fuck all. You know. Uhm brut and then obviously you know, then I was moss on drugs and stuff, came clean and went to rehab all that, but I never ever tapped into that, I didn't, I just completely blocked it out. And when Leo died in that time when I was you know, my emotions were back and you know I was normal and all that shit, when that happened and when that happened and I actually suffered that loss at that time, that is when my grandmother you know, that all came out. That's when it hit me. I think it was almost a year later. That it actually settled in and, and it hit me, it hit me hard, yoh it was bad, it was it was terrible and uhm so there was that emotional thing that happened there or mental, mental emotional thing that happened there, and then could not calm me down, I went absolutely, I lost it, I went crazy. I was banging my head and I, I lost it. It was like this amount of anger that, that took over me that was, it was dark, it was ugly, it was yoh. It was really bad, and uhm so they took me to the doctor, they basically carried me from off the floor banging myself and put me into the car, took me to the doctor who injected me with Valium. So I was undergoing all this shit, okay emotional, mental crap that I was going through and then you go and inject me with Valium. Come on! And it felt awesome. I loved the Valium. Thereafter it was over.

- F: Was it the numbing effect that you loved?
- M: Mmmm. It was the numbing effect that I loved but also it was know that I had drugs in my system. Valium is a drug. I don't care who says what, Eminem is addicted to Valium, not Eminem's mother is addicted to Valium. It is a drug, I really don't care who says what.
- F: I agree with you. It is very addictive.
- M: Ja, ja. So that, that thought ...[intervened]
- F: It's like morphine.
- M: Exactly. So is this by the Tramasac that I took. But look I am fine. I am feeling a bit otherwise but I am fine. Uhm, what was I going to say now.
- F: Mmmm ...[laughing] Look at that jump in your mind.
- M: ...[laughing] no really, what was I going to say now, oh ja, no the Valium and stuff, so ja, knowing that I have drugs in my system and knowing that I wanted drugs at that point in time because I mean, the loss, loss is a big thing. That's why like with my dad's health and everything, that's going on with him, I don't know like what I would do, if, if he had to die or something like that would do you know what I am saying. So, so that's my biggest fear at the moment.
- F: I think it's a realistic fear and the reason why I ask that is because you are, you know in, on this track of recovery and I think sometimes like you said, uhm its important to know what led to, what triggered certain relapses and it's about putting the tools in place to just protect yourself from that again. I think it is nice to, it's good for you to know that its loss so what are you going to do about it kind of thing.
- M: And you see there was more loss in that year as well, I mean I lost that guy that I really liked a hell of a lot. Uhm I lost a very close friend in a car accident, okay but he is still alive but not okay, like he, his head is all messed up and shit. So, there was, there was a hell of a lot of loss in that year all at once. And I am, I am not good with it. I, and I can say it now as well, if it had to come now, I don't know what I would do. I don't know how I would handle it. I would need a hell of a lot of support, a hell of a lot of support, I would need everybody's

support because I, I don't know how I would be able to, I am scared. I am very scared. Uhm, but ja. It's a scary thought.

F: Mmmm. Loss is never easy and it is also not really ever predictable.

M: Exactly.

F: It's not like you can prepare for it, but you are right when you say support plays a huge role and it sounds to me like support, it's like what sounds different to your other processes that you have been through is uhm one of the things, there is a lot that sounds different, but I think one of the things is the support that you are getting now. It seems like the family dynamics are very different now.

M: Very very different. You see my brother wrote me off, completely wrote me off, I mean I remember one time I went to his house. It was while I was clean in that year and a half that I was clean. I went to his house, uhm and I rang his bell and he came to the door and he said, what do you want, and I said I came to say Salaam and he said Salaam and he closed the door. So he didn't even open the gate. Like I was outside on the road still. He opened the door of the house ...[laughing], closed the door and I stood there and I thought okay he is going to open the gate or, and no it didn't happen and fine whatever, so I walked back to my sister's house. But his words were, until she is clean for three years, I want nothing to do with her basically.

F: Okay.

M: And what's different this time is that I wasn't even clean for maybe six months yet and he accepted me back in his life and ...[inaudible] so.

F: Okay.

M: So my brother is there, uhm back in my life after many many years. My sister is always there. [phone rings]. She is always there. And my mother, my mother is also always been there. Like really through it all. My mother of everybody, even though she wasn't the best of mothers to have, I mean unfortunately it's a crappy to thing to say, she didn't do a very good job, but uhm when it came to absolutely needing someone. She was the one person I could depend on.

F: Okay.

M: And that's it. She may not have been there for me through it all or whatever or experienced it with me or comforted me or you know gave me any TLC, like a mother is supposed to do or whatever, but its good, it made me tough. Now it's good. For me, I feel now it's good. Maybe back then I was lacking it a bit, a lot. A little lot. Ja.

F: What the toughness.

M: No the, you know when you need that, that little bit of affection from your mother, you need that warmth from your mother, you need to feel like there is someone you can go to, that will hold you and make you feel safe you know. I mean I was never safe. I was never safe hey. I just you know. One thing I just wanted was safety, I just wanted to feel safe, not, not safe a protected from the shit, just safe inside you know.

F: Okay.

M: You know what I mean.

F: Yes.

M: I needed that and I didn't get that. Throughout my entire life. I didn't have that and I was never safe, so uhm, but its fine, like I said now, now its fine, it made me, it made me a very tough person. Except for when it comes to dentist and ...[intervened]

F: ...[laughing]

M: Uhhh.

F: Do you feel safe now.

M: Uhhh ja I do. I do. I really do and its, funny enough it's not my mother that made me safe or whatever, or any actual person that made me feel safe, its, it's the fact that I know who I am, I know it's me. I feel safe because I made myself safe and its ...[intervened]

F: By the choices you have made?

M: Mmmm, that's why I say, sorry I think like my eyes do look like they are going whooo.

F: No that's fine.

M: It feels like it ...[laughing]

F: If you need to sleep you can just let me know.

M: No no no. I can't sleep I am here until half past six.

F: Oh wow.

M: ...[laughing]

F: Okay. I don't even know what is the time now?

M: Twenty past five.

F: Are you still okay though, in terms of continuing?

M: Mmmm.

F: Are you sure?

M: Mmmm.

F: You know you can just tell me okay it's time to shut up its getting uncomfortable.

M: ...[laughing]

F: Uhm, you were talking about safety and ja, it, I think uhm being on the street and then your relationships sounded incredibly unsafe, uhm ja it just sounded like a rat race. So I was wondering with your, or maybe, maybe let's just talk a little bit about what it was like being on the streets because you were actually living on the streets.

M: Ja, uhhh that's hectic hey. That is a bit of heavy one to go into.

F: Okay.

M: Uhm okay what do you want to know ...[laughing]

F: ...[laughing]

- M: You see with everything else I could have just rambled on but with, with that, a lot of things happens out there but you know you need to understand that there is evil out there like you won't believe so what do you want to know. ...[laughing]
- F: Whatever you would be comfortable sharing with me in terms of your experience on the streets.
- M: Look I moved around a lot. Uhm to me, that is, that is how my mind worked. To me it was safer to be on the mover all the time than to be ...[intervened]
- F: In one place.
- M: In one place. I wasn't going to go and sleep on cardboard boxes with a whole lot of people hell no. That wasn't going to happen. I would move all the time and I didn't sleep on the streets and I didn't smell like I was on the streets, I didn't look like I was on the streets, so what I did, like okay for example in Bloemfontein, uhm these clothes that I am wearing right now, okay I would wear it through the day, I would go to a mall or a garage or wherever, you know the paraplegic toilets, I would go and clean myself up there, so I would always move around with like one bag with like a few toiletries in it that I would get along the way. I would go spin it somewhere or you know, I, I would organise money and make sure to buy that little bit of things or whatever, or uhm I would go to people's houses or if I am in a guesthouse or whatever because there was times I would book myself into a guest house, then I take all that, you know that small stuff.
- F: Mmmm.
- M: Collect that shit ...[laughing] It worked.
- F: I guess so.
- M: And uhm so ja I would always look sort of clean and presentable not like I was on the street, and these clothes that I am wearing now I would end up selling them and buying other clothes.
- F: Okay.

M: So that is how I basically made it. Anything that came into my hands I could sell, so in Bloemfontein it started with uhm my cousin hooked me up with some tools. Was it you that said something?

F: Uhuh,

M: Okay with tools, so what I did was I went to you know where they have these houses that have the panel beaters outside their houses kind of thing.

F: Mmmm.

M: A place called Hilton in Bloemfontein. I don't know if you know it.

F: Uhuh.

M: It's a very crappy white area.

F: Okay.

M: So I would go there and that's how I started, I started selling tools, so I would sell pliers and fricken wrenches and fricken you know water pump shit and all that jazz, screwdrivers the works. To your panel beaters, and you see it was very easy for me to sell shit because of my mouth and, and just the way I act, I am a good salesperson. It runs in the ...[inaudible] ...[laughing] and that's how I got along and I walked forever, I walked the whole of Bloemfontein and uhm eventually it started going into crime where I would hook up with people and I would break into houses and [long pause] in any case so uhm where was I, oh ja breaking into houses and all that jazz and ja, that's, that's how it goes and I didn't sleep on the street. When I did sleep, when I really did need to sleep, I would have enough money to book a cheap guesthouse or a room or something or someone's house or someone would give me a place to sleep, you know I would go on, like I am normal person, not someone on the street, I would carry myself that way. That people would trust me to take me into their home. You know so many times I walked into the wrong person's home, but it, it's a consequence, it comes with the lifestyle you know. So uhm that's how I managed and a lot of the times, look I started thinking to myself I would rather be awake than sleep. Because when I need to sleep I put myself into a situation. So, when it is very late, I end up in the casinos.

F: Okay.

M: Its 24 hours, people are there all the time, it's a lot of money to make. And when the sun starts coming up, you can leave again. Or carry on the mission. So, it was like, like in PE, I actually stored my shit in the lockers ...[laughing] at the Boardwalk Casino.

F: At the casino? Oh wow.

M: My shit was in the lockers there. And I would go out and hustle and whatever and come back and so that's how I made it. I won't lie there were situations but it comes with the lifestyle.

F: Mmmm okay. It uhm, it's unfortunate.

F: And going home was not an option.

M: It was, but that would mean I have to stop drugs.

F: Okay.

M: ...[laughing]

F: Right.

M: ...[laughing] I didn't want to. I didn't want to. I wanted to, but I couldn't. I was trapped, I did want to, I wanted to live a normal fricken life, eventually I did, but I was too, I was too stuck with it. Way too stuck on it. Sorry one second.

F: Mmmm.

M: Okay.

F: Is everything okay.

M: Ja, no one is allowed in the bakery. So I see they are with my dad so its fine. So uhm ja uhhh I was really, really trapped.

F: Okay ja you had some rough experiences in your accommodations for the nights and that sort of thing, uhm and earlier when you were talking about loss, I thought about those experiences and, and I thought, loss is not just about death, or losing family ties, but it is also when someone takes advantage of you.

M: Dignity.

F: Ja that's loss of dignity right.

M: Like many times I would say you know, and it was my words, very often out there, you know what, there is so much that I don't have, do not take my dignity. Many times it worked, many times it didn't. People are evil out there. People are really really evil. And sick. Really sick. Uhm but even my cutting. I even used that to manipulate at a stage, some of scars aren't like really linked to, to painful experiences, some of these scares were actually just to fuck with someone.

F: Okay.

M: Just to get by.

F: Okay meaning.

M: Meaning there was okay like these.

F: You see I didn't even notice those. Okay they are fine hey, you can't really see them.

M: Ja they are fine, but they were, they were very, they were very thin ones but they bled a lot.

F: Okay.

M: Okay and my blood was thin at that time. ...[laughing] so I would bleed a lot. So this is did walking up a hill. I got to the hill and I started walking down covered in blood, waiting for someone to stop.

F: You mean a car or something?

M: Mmmm.

F: For what purpose?

M: So that I could get something out of them. So you play with people's emotions, you play on the emotions. That's the way I made money a lot also. I played on people's emotions. I did. I never lied. I told them the truth, so the, giving me

money was up to them. I never begged also. I told them my situation, I told them my story, I told them where I am at.

F: Mmmm.

M: It was entirely up to them and they gave me money. I didn't tell them give me money.

F: ...[laughing]

M: They gave it out of their own free will and they dropped me off at the Casino. And ja, so some of these ...[inaudible] okay not all of them, some of them are really just to fuck with people.

F: Okay.

M: And get my way out there. It was survival. It was really absolutely survival, so I mean you are driving up the road and you see this little woman walking with a fricken bag and this blood dripping here everywhere, are you not going to stop.

F: You right I guess living on the street is about survival of the fittest hey?

M: Yes, and you will do whatever it takes and the thing is, I could have survived very nicely if I was willing to open my legs and you know. I would have made it very very well. I would have made a Lot of money and shit. But I couldn't do that. I myself couldn't do that, so I had to find other ways.

F: That wasn't an option because?

M: It wasn't an option. It just wasn't an option.

F: I wonder if that has to do with dignity?

M: Well this body is mine at the end of the day, it doesn't belong to anybody but me. So is I, I will not just give it up to anybody. Just like that, I, I couldn't I mean, ja maybe I have no self-love and I have no fricken self-respect so to speak or whatever but I had my dignity. I did.

F: Mmmm.

M: Even if it was half of it, I had some of it. You know what I mean. There was no way I was going to make that go away. But I could have hey, I could have made

it big time, and trust me the thought crossed my mind, I don't mean going and standing on the corner like a you know, I could have made it real big and real flippen black opps ...[laughing] you know what I mean.

F: Mmmm.

M: The thought did cross my mind. There was just no way I was going to do it. There wasn't.

F: So some of those scars were used as part of survival? And others were used initially you said it was out of the need for attention from the family.

M: Ja that was long. Those were ...[intervened]

F: And then it became what?

M: Then it became an addiction. Then I started loving the feeling that's the problem. I started enjoying the feeling. It became a sick fetish at first, no after the addiction.

F: Ja.

M: And thereafter it became a coping mechanism. And thereafter it became just used.

F: Okay.

M: To my advantage.

F: Ja. What do you mean when you say, a coping mechanism? How did it help?

M: It uhm, how can I say, I always used to, like I never cried tears. I never. I wouldn't allow myself to cry tears. So I would always say my blood is my tears. So I am only really hurt when I cry and if I am not going to cry then I mean really now. So my, cutting myself, my blood was my tears that's how, that's how I was thinking at that time and uhm I would not allow anybody to clean up my blood because everyone would be like uhh and they want to you know put me under the tap and shit like that you know. Uhm but no it was my tears and I would not allow anybody else, I would say don't you dare wipe my tears because I didn't care I was, at the end of the day I had no home. I had nowhere to go and sit and fricken just enjoy cutting myself, so leave me the fuck alone,

if I am going to sit in your car, while you are upstairs and I am going to cut myself ...[laughing] I am going to do it, I don't care as long as I don't mess in your car. So I would, I would do it wherever I was, whenever I wanted to, I would cut myself, it was like my drug man. The high that you get out of cutting is not the same as the high that you get out of drugs. It's another high, all on its own. I have this passionate look on my face don't I.

F: You do.

M: Because I am not lying. Even now I can tell you, it's a ja, it's a very very other high. You can't get it from drugs, you can't get it from anything, but I am over it. I know I look passionate about it, I do know that I look like I probably want to go and fucking cut myself right now, but I don't ...[laughing] it's just ...[intervened]

F: When was the last time you did?

M: I can't remember. I can't remember more than a year, more that, ...[inaudible] but the last I remember was ja. I didn't cut on my arms any more.

F: So if it's your tears or your expression of your tears. We usually cry, sometimes when we are happy ja. Uhm but most of the time it's when we experiencing like a down mood or something sad. At the times that you would ...[intervened]

M: Ja out of anger, it was mostly anger, there was no room to be sad. There was no room to be happy. It was only anger out there, nothing else. Nothing else, so when you get touched and when you get fucked, sorry, you are angry. You get very angry.

F: Mmmm.

M: When someone hurts you, you get angry.

F: And there was a lot of hurt during that time. Ja.

M: And I was always angry.

F: Mmmm.

M: I was always very angry.

F: And where is the anger on this road to recovery?

M: Oh I don't know. ...[laughing] I get angry at the fuckers outside.

F: ...[laughing]

M: Gosh I can kill them.

F: ...[laughing]

M: No, no angry anymore. Anger is a very, its dark man. To me, anger is a very dark emotion. I don't want that. And it is not good for me also. Oh I got angry once also, that Saturday when I was in this office with two police officers standing here and here and my uncle is standing there and the fucker that stole from me standing there. I got very angry.

F: And then?

M: Well I had to walk out of the office, because I swore him very ugly and I was about to attack him with the police officer standing in front of me.

F: ...[Laughing]

M: So my uncle chased me out of the office ...[laughing] but you see before in anger I used to black out completely. I think I told you this no?

F: Uhuh.

M: I told you. And I was like I have got that control where I, I don't black out completely. I can actually now, here there, wait, whoa, whoa.

F: Okay.

M: Out! So, that's, that's a bit, because the last time all I remember was jumping, the office is here and the guy that wanted to hit my dad was there, I don't know how I got from here to there, and I do not remember anybody picking me up off him but this is what I was told.

F: Okay.

M: So that, but that was still early ages. I mean early stages.

F: Ja.

M: So I don't know.

F: It sounds like you are, uhm, I think anger is a difficult emotion for most. Uhm I know myself when I get angry I, I am passive aggressive. So I will like just start quieting and distancing and I cry when when I am angry and I think everybody responds differently but it sounds to me like, it's not that anger isn't present in this road, road to recovery but it sounds almost like you are controlling it rather than its controlling you.

M: Definitely. The thing is like I said, for me anger is a very very dark emotion, it is. Uhm the reason I say that, look the, that is one emotion that I understand better than anything else, because I lived, I grew up angry, I lived with anger, I lived with this deep-rooted rage inside of me, so ask me to explain flippen affection to your, to describe love or describe happiness its difficult, but ask me to describe anger and I give you one descriptive word and I will tell you it's dark. And that should say it all. Because that, its fuck it's an evil thing. It's really evil. I don't have anger anymore. ...[laughing] I can't be angry anymore.

F: Cant? Wont?

M: Wont. Ek sal nie! ...[laughing]

F: ...[laughing]

M: ...[laughing]

F: That sounds like ...[inaudible] that there was no room for happiness or sadness, it was just anger, and it almost sounds like ...[intervened]

M: Complete 360.

F: There is more room for those emotions now.

M: That's why I say it's a complete, I am blown away, I am, I find it really sometimes I do actually pinch myself and like, am I going to wake up from this now or what is going on.

F: ...[laughing]

M: Like because its, I never ever believed that I would be where I am today. I always believed that I will always be this failure, I will always be a total fuck up. Uhm I remember when my mother said to me one time, I was very young man.

She said if you want to do something do it right or don't do it at all. And I turned around and I said ja I am fucking up. So I am fucking right, proper, and that's exactly what I did. So to be where I am today is, it's ...[intervened]

F: Shooo. What does it mean to be where you are today, because you called that fucking up, what do you call this? What does it mean now?

M: You sound so cute when you swear.

F: Do I?

M: Ja.

F: Oh okay I'll swear more often.

M: No don't. ...[laughing]

F: ...[laughing]

M: ...[laughing]

F: ...[laughing]

M: What does it mean to me now? Wait what?

F: ...[laughing]

M: Sorry it's you who is ...[intervened]

F: Sorry.

M: Busy with the cute swearing.

F: Uhh I am going to say it again so you called ...[laughing] that time of your life fucking up right, right, so what do you call this time?

M: Doing it right.

F: Doing it right.

M: Just doing it right. There is one saying I will never forget and that's from TC. Look that, that place did, they have nice sayings and things.

F: Okay.

M: The one that stuck with me the most is do your thing right and everything else will follow. So that is one thing that really does stick with me. Uhh I need to pee [toilet break].

F: Feeling better.

M: Ja much better.

F: Its funny how just that sense of relief is just so amazing.

M: Ja it is.

F: Okay I have a few more questions.

M: Okay.

F: So what does recovery mean to you now?

M: After time in and out of rehabilitation programs, I never really knew what recovery meant let alone what it meant to me. Now I know... recovery means inner peace, belonging, conscience and patience. Recovery means responsible care and concern and taking full responsibility and accountability for every aspect of your life. It is uhm..a holistic transformation. A process of unlearning learnt behaviours and becoming socially accepted in the real world. What it truly means to ME though is TRUST. Being in recovery is tough on all levels, eish, but what gets me through it every single day is trust. Being trusted! Knowing that I can be relied on, knowing that I belong, and knowing that my existence matters and I am not frowned upon anymore. Recovery is a day to day challenge, you know...a constant battle between mind body and soul. It's a, uhm, a balance, of which right now honestly I still haven't managed to find and maintain it. But it, it's a balance, a balance between spirituality, mentality, emotional stability and physical wellness. Letting go...of the things that haunt me is the biggest challenge of all. In fact, recovery is not just a challenge, but challenges within challenges. It never ends. A life long journey is what it is. Knowing that I am an addict and I am in recovery is something that constantly needs to be in the back of my head. It is never to be forgotten because in that moment of ignorance.... In a blink of an eye it can all be over! Boundaries...Limits...Boundaries...Limits...Knowing where to get off, knowing

when enough is enough, when not to push yourself over board, and to stop and breathe. These are things that are crucial to my recovery.

F: Thank you that. Uhm I just want to also talk a little bit about uhm, you are very poetic and I loved that ...[laughing]

M: In my story?

F: Ja ...[laughing]

M: ...[laughing]

F: You are.

M: Do you want to hear my crack pipe.

F: Ja. And I want, you, you know there are little bits of it and eventually it comes to a complete poem if I can put it that way and close. So I just want you to, if that's okay with you, just to read it and then just explain to me what that means for you, the ending one. Because I am pretty sure that it sounds to me crawling in a pipe was literal, when you were in that steel factory?

M: No.

F: No?

M: Uhuh.

F: Okay but I think there is a very big figurative meaning to it?

M: Ja.

F: A deeper meaning and I was hoping we could just explore that?

M: So I must read it?

F: Ja.

M: Okay, crawling in a crack pipe, tripping over lines of snow I rushed as I chased crystals, a blue flame below. Round and round I go in a glow, roll and burn, roll and burn. Then down seeking equilibrium to green and green I turn. Alright so crawling in a crack pipe is basically the crack pipe is a long steel pipe like

this right, and you have got your, the inside, uhm, like you see that wires and stuff.

F: Ja.

M: There right, you use that as gauze to put your piece on it and you light it and it melts into there. That's me.

F: Okay.

M: You understand? So okay, crawling in a crack pipe, can you picture yourself crawling inside a pipe? So you are running in this pipe, like okay imagine a rat on a wheel, that's all its doing, is running on this wheel, its fucking getting nowhere. So that's crawling in a crack pipe. So basically what I am saying here is all me, tripping over lines of snow, lines of snow is the cocaine.

F: So when you are crawling in the pipe, meaning, if I think of a pipe, it's very enclosed, it's almost like suffocating.

M: Yes trapped.

F: Trapped.

M: Yes. Okay tripping over lines of snow, so ...[intervened]

F: The coke.

M: It's the coke. So it's just basically tripping over it all the time, you are just tripping over these lines of snow. It's ...[intervened]

F: And that was you being tripped all the time.

M: That, that was me, ja. I rushed as I chased crystals, a blue flame below. So you, that song of Adel, chasing pavements have you ever heard it.

F: Mmmm.

M: Ja ...[laughing] so uhm chasing crystals is, is like, how can I say chasing, right, so chasing is when you put something on foil and you chasing the dragon with the pen or a straw whatever. So that's chasing the dragon, you are chasing these, the smoke, you basically inhaling it. So I am basically just telling you here, that I went from being in the crack pipe, tripping over lines of snow, now I

am chasing these crystals, a blue flame below. So blue flame below wouldn't be the chasing part, it would be the part where I am actually literally talking about me and drugs, so ...[laughing], so this poem so to speak is uhm, jussy a druggy would really just understand this completely.

F: Mmmm.

M: The blue flame you cannot smoke uhh TIK out of a lolly with a red flame, a blue flame, there is a thing about the blue flame, so I basically just emphasised that, there is no real deeper meaning to that one. Uhm run, run I go in a glow, that's the glow, that's the, so again I am trapped again inside the lolly, burn roll burn roll, is basically just the whole process of its an ongoing roll en brand crap thing.

F: Were you burning?

M: So uhm down seeking equilibrium. So all the time I am up here, I am up here, I am up here, and I am now seeking something to just level me out I will go to green and cream, which is your weed and your Mandrax.

F: Okay.

M: So, so there is ja. That's it I don't know if I explained it properly.

F: It completely makes sense I think when I really, I understood the literal meaning because that's how you would uhm, uhm indulge in each of those drugs for the crack you get the pipe. Uhm for the other stuff you need the light below, you need to burn it to puff it, so I got all of that, but, the more and more I read it I thought I think beyond just the literal use of each of those drugs it just sounded so much more symbolic.

M: Yes.

F: Uhm and that's what I was asking in terms of the symbolism of that for you and ja, that's what I was asking.

M: Did you get it?

F: Ja.

M: ...[laughing]

F: So there was, I get the, the idea of this entrapment, uhm and the idea that uhm, it was ongoing, it was like a continuous repetition of the same thing, of a cycle that just kept going around.

M: Definitely.

F: Uhm and I also see that's why I asked when you were talking about you have to burn this in order to enjoy I think it sounded like you got burned a lot. Along the way.

M: Definitely. Definitely so uhm, I like the way you read.

F: ...[laughing] I like the way you write.

M: ...[laughing] That's the thing about writing, it's now always just about you, it's about your reader as well. I think. I don't know I am not a writer but ...[intervened]

F: I think you should be after reading your, I really do.

M: lol

F: And I think it is not just because of what you say, I think you have such a strong message to convey and your honesty is just so real, but in the way that you write it is almost like I was on that chase with you.

M: That is so ...[intervened]

F: And I was, I was flung between, I was in Bloem and in Kimberly and then I was here and then ...[intervened]

M: ...[laughing]

F: And running and, I am saying just the way that you wrote you didn't even say it, you know I am running now and that sort of thing but I was there with you. And I think that's powerful and I actually think you could really reach out.

M: I was, I was writing at a stage. I used to write a lot, that's all I wanted to ever do, I would walk around with a book and a pen, I don't care if I don't have cigarettes, as long as I have a book and a pen. Uhm until my ex-husband decided to burn all my writing and I mean years of writing. And when he sent that up in flames it was like ja, I will never do this shit again ...[laughing]. That,

that was my ever end hey. I was, it was like you know, he took my dream and he literally smoked it. Ja. It's the worst thing he could have done to me. I mean I don't mind the beatings come on, you get over that. I really don't mind the beatings and shit, that is physical shit, it goes away. But to burn my writing was the worst thing he could have done.

F: Mmmm that was, that was your life?

M: Ja. It was, I never ever wrote fricken shit that wasn't real, I never, I never ever wrote about money I didn't have that you know ...[inaudible] ...[laughing] bling bling ...[laughing] sorry I was an rapper to as well, I use to write my own lyrics.

F: That's cool.

M: And uhh, he just let it go.

F: So what was, are you saying that this was your first time writing again after that?

M: I think that was one thing that made it even harder for me that's why it was so delayed. I had to really really fight this thing that this one thing that I said I will never ever do again, I said I will never, I will never write again after that, so, so that was one of my battles throughout this thing, I, besides going back and all of that. It was having to write again.

F: Mmmm, I am wondering how you experienced this process of sharing your story... of writing and telling?

M: [laughing] you know, from writing a little of my life story to then explaining the process... I have learned that I am not doing so badly at all. [laughing] In fact, I have gained so much from this exercise that I have been given a chance to really see my growth. To really see...see just how far I actually have come on this journey, yoh.. it has opened my eyes hey, to what greatness I can achieve and what I can accomplish in my life. I can say that..that I am once again driven to become better and do more!

F: hmmm, sometimes putting it into paper makes it real, and opportunity to reflect.

M: Yip, exactly.

F: I wanted to ask, just in closing about your experience with Ibogaine. Can you tell me a about your experience please:

M: My experience with ibogaine, was the most amazing thing that ever happened to me. The journey that I was taken on was so real. The thoughts that flashed through my mind as it placed itself in the right places. Every feeling I felt was real. For the first time in my life (or for as long as I can remember) I could feel real things. Real thoughts, real everything!!! I had to be asleep while having the treatment done but I do remember how it felt. I remember for a day after the ibogaine I couldn't even walk properly, but such a pure feeling, the feeling of innocence all over again, there isn't a way to describe it. There is just nothing out there in this world like ibogaine. Right now I would give a leg and an arm just to have the opportunity to do it again. Utter peace of mind, True bliss, serenity, and inner peace. Like calm waters of a flowing river after angry crashing waves of the ocean... something like that.....

F: Hmm. Was your experience with Ibogaine different from other rehabilitative programmes you've been involved in?

M: Ja, very different to other rehabs, for one, there was no real punishment for being an addict. When I first walked into minds alive I thought wow...this is like a holiday home. I felt welcomed and felt warmth. There was also no work to do, my food was cooked for me and the house was cleaned. All I had to really do was focus on myself and the process that I was going through. I didn't feel labelled as a junky when I was there. I felt like a guest undergoing an awesome treatment. If I were to recommend a detoxification treatment, I would definitely recommend ibogaine, for the simple fact that it worked for me, and nothing but nothing worked for me before.

F: I'm thinking that it would be really interesting if you could because what the poem here that is almost like in bits and pieces like I said right through your story and then it comes to this point, is incomplete.

M: You want me to complete it.

F: Ja. Because if you think about it, its, its, its incomplete.

M: It is.

- F: And it either means that it, there is no end and that's fine, or it means that there is a continuation that you could add on that still doesn't have an end because there is no end. But I almost think that that's, this poem just speaks to like the books that he burned, about a past life, and yet you are living ...[inaudible] in a very new light and I just wonder if that's worth featuring.
- M: ...[Laughing]
- F: Its just a thought and that's where I am going to leave you.
- M: Like this ...[laughing]
- F: ...[laughing]
- M: Just like this. ...[laughing]
- F: To think about that a little bit ...[laughing]
- M: Damn you ...[laughing]
- F: Maybe I will ask the Ibergain in the document I sent you. Uhm but I just think you are right he had no right to burn those, those, those were ...[intervened]
- M: My life
- F: Chapters of your life.
- M: Yoh it was my life, it was years of writing, I protected that writing with everything on the streets I protected that writing, now you tell me.
- F: Ja that's a lot. But I think you used such an important tense you know in in the sentence.
- M: That?
- F: It was.
- M: Yes. [phone rings] Hallo, I said do not disturb ...[inaudible] Ja I am still busy in my meeting hey. Okay.
- F: You could see that conversation.
- M: No what?

F: Oh I thought it someone in the, in the store ...[laughing] so you are looking at them talking to you.

M: Uhuh. No I told you it's such a habit for me to, to keep looking.

F: No that's, it really has not been a distraction at all. Ja for me. Uhm are there any comments or questions that you have? That you would like to put on the floor?

M: No. Not really. Are you happy with everything that you got?

F: Honestly I, it is not even about happiness like it is just feeling so genuinely honoured that you were able to share parts of your life that I know are difficult and bring them to the surface for someone like me. I am like, I truly am honoured.

M: What do you mean someone like you.

F: I am just like this random human being in your life and I, I am truly grateful for that, I am amazed at your strength, uhm, when I read your, your story I even thought to myself I was, one part of me was like that, I waited for the beatings and like what is she talking about she just sat there waiting for her beatings, and yet, and I read and I read and I read it again and I thought to myself but in each of those occasions, uhm there was a switch that made you leave, fight back, something, but at some point you said enough is enough and I, I stuck onto that and I thought what is that, where is that strength, what made her just go uhuh its done now? And what I am trying to say is there was so much strength that came out of your story for me. Uhm and that was just so inspirational. And I am just so privileged to be, uhh someone who can share that because technically hearing your story, going to translate it into something that the academic world can see, is, is me also interpreting your story for you and in that way I am a part of it and I just thank you for that, that's just amazing.

M: But people will learn from this right?

F: Yes.

M: There is something to gain out of it. That people can gain from this.

F: Absolutely ja.

M: As long as there is that. Then I am happy.

F: So that element of assisting others is also important to you. Ja.

M: Ja its very important.

F: And you know what I learned from also interviewing others, is that desire to assist others in need is, is constant, as it is with you, uhm and it is for them, like, like it's an important part of even the recovery. Uhm but what I learned is sometimes we think okay because I have cancer, my desire to assist people has to be in people recovering from cancer for example and what I learned from uhm a few of the participants is its just about helping, like there were so many who, aren't involved in anything related to rehabilitating people to oh I see that you need help come let me get you to the resources, it has nothing to do with the field of addiction, they are busy, soup kitchens, cooking and just randomly taking to the people on the street. It doesn't matter what, sometimes we are not, sometimes for our own reason it may not be good to or we may not be in a place where we can help people who are recoveries because we are still in our own process.

M: Of course ja. But we can still be able to fulfil that desire to assistant in completely irrelevant and almost safe ways. You get what I am saying.

F: No definitely.

M: And that is what came out in it.

F: That's, that's wonderful to want to give back.

M: We have to. There is another one that comes from TC, that says you can't keep it unless you give it away. So that one also sticks with me a lot and the other one is man helping man to help himself.

F: Wow.

M: So those three really, really stick out for me like you won't believe [phone rings] Just one second. Hallo. Ja, oh man okay you are going to me after work no? You going to come to me after work? No no no I am not going. Okay. Okay Salaam. Shame my friend literally just came to help pack the shelves today.

- F: Oh wow, that's so cool.
- M: Ja he comes, he was actually coming the whole week to help my father on the floor and whatever repacking the shelves.
- F: That's amazing. Look at your support system huh?
- M: No but the thing is we only got back together now, what two three weeks now, we broke up for a month as friends.
- F: Oh okay.
- M: Because he fell in love with me. And he told me.
- F: And that is not how you see feel right?
- M: So they all told me I am wrong, that people can't help how they feel and whatever, and I must give him another chance and all that. I don't feel I was wrong.
- F: ...[laughing] I have broken up with friends for falling in love with me too.
- M: You see.
- F: Ja.
- M: I wasn't wrong.
- F: Mmmm and that distance actually is good because we made a decision to either become friends again and keep it strictly platonic or that it's not going to work, because we just don't feel the same way.
- M: Ja well that's exactly what happened with us. Shame but he is there for me hey.
- F: That's awesome.
- M: This man is really there for me. Through anything.
- F: That's really cool. It, it sounds to me like, it's also about uhm being wise about who you choose to keep in your life.
- M: Definitely. I have learned all about that. I have really learned all about that.
- F: Are you good?

M: I am, I am going to be honest with you now, uhm I do feel like there is a lot of things uhm happening right now. Uhm besides really needing the toilet that I can't use here.

F: Oh okay.

M: I have to go home for that one.

F: Okay ...[laughing]

M: Oh shit that's recorded.

F: ...[laughing] That's fine ...[intervened]

M: ...[laughing] But ja yes there is, there is a lot of things that is happening and then also with the tablet that is in me that is also just making my, ja. So. It's really not, it's not a good tablet. I am telling you do not take this tablet. It is damn good. But it is damn bad its really I am no yesterday I was like withdrawing from it so what I did yesterday was I saw the dog running down the road, and I am calling the dog and I go to the neighbour and I am knocking on his house wanting to break down his doors, he is not there I asked the other neighbour, where is he, she doesn't know where he is, I go around the corner like to the one that's just on top of us and here is he coming out of the house with the dog. I looked at the dog and I am like dude you were just running out there now, I ran, out of the house, I am standing Trigger, Trigger!. Only to realise that it wasn't Trigger.

F: ...[laughing]

M: I absolutely lost my nut yesterday, it was, it was crazy. I literally lost my head yesterday. But I think it's the, the withdrawals from this uhm Tramazac because I took it two days in a row. And I should not have. So I need to stop I just wish this pain would go away so that I can stop. But it's the problem, I feel nothing at the moment, whereas this morning I was literally standing and holding my face and crying from the pain again.

F: But I do think that uhm, ja, pain is not a lekker thing to feel, emotional or physical. Uhm, but neither is ...[intervened]

M: The Tramasac.

F: Ja. Like there is relapse. So I think, like I said you would know best when it's time to say uhuh.

M: I do know.

F: So my suggestion would be rather that you go back to her and say I can't handle this pain, give me something else or give me another suggestion. Sometimes we put disprin on a toothache and that helps.

M: There is no tooth.

F: Well you can ...[intervened]

M: ...[laughing]

F: But still there is still a gum ...[laughing]

M: ...[laughing]

F: You know I am using it as an example.

M: ...[laughing]

F: Or a clove, I don't know if you have heard of that too. I don't know if it works, a clove I have never tried, a disprin I have. But you just take you know the normal cooking clove and you just put it on there and just leave it like there, it probably doesn't taste very delicious, but apparently that draws the pain out as well. I know my family members believe in that a lot. I haven't tried it. So but or alternatively go back to her and say something isn't right there, you know but make the decision that is going to be best for you.

M: Ja no definitely. Definitely ...[laughing]

F: Ja.

M: I just like right now I feel whooo.

F: ...[Laughing] ja. I think we have, and sometimes speaking too much also just adds to it, so ja, but I uhm I just want to thank you again and if you know, uhm if there is stuff that you want to talk about that is maybe just too much on the surface you know I am there.

M: Thank you.

F: You can just send me a please call me, send me a WhatsApp call me or whatever and you know I am there.

M: Thank you.

F: Sometimes it's just about finding, letting it out, other than just bottling it in.

M: No I won't lie, with everything else I feel very good as well uhm, you know a lot of, of positive obviously came out of this as well, you know realising you know where, the more you say it, where I was, where I am, I don't know if you have noticed how many times I say it, the more you say it the more real it becomes and it's a good feeling and it's an awesome feeling, so uhm ja, it helps in that way a lot. And uhh especially you know when you get feedback from you like you know when you said about my strength and things. Those things are good things to hear and its, it helps a lot to hear those things. Its uhm, its ja, its good. Its good.

F: That's awesome.

M: It's good to hear good things.

F: And it's all good things that are valid. Because it's you, you that has done all of this, it's you that's brought you where you are. That's yoh, that's amazing ...[laughing] really it just, it leaves me baffled it really is amazing. You really are awesome and ...[inaudible] I hope it continues that way, but like I say, this is not the, it sounds like a goodbye and it's really not goodbye ...[laughing]

M: ...[laughing]

F: No I just want to emphasis uhm that you are really are an amazingly strong woman and I shoo, you really are doing so well and I know it will continue. But in terms of you getting through the process, sometimes the interview can bring up certain things, like the writing ...[inaudible] and that sort of thing, but I know you have good supportive structure now. I also know that I am happy to be one of those supportive structures.

M: Thank you.

F: Okay.

- M: Does it look like my tattoo is going though?
- F: It does. I was actually wondering about it, thinking what made you choose that name in particular, but it does.
- M: Oh it was my name.
- F: It was your name? What do you mean?
- M: Many years ago, I was known as Poison.
- F: Seriously?
- M: I was a very poisonous person. So people would call me Poison.
- F: Because of what, the manipulation and that sort of thing?
- M: Because I could make you do things without you even realising what the hell you are doing.
- F: Was it the street name?
- M: Mmmm.
- F: Because, or did your family give you that name?
- M: No, no, street name.
- F: Okay.
- M: Street name, it was Poison, Lizzy, Tia. Told you I had names.
- F: ...[laughing]
- M: In PE I was Abigail.
- F: ...[laughing]
- M: ...[laughing]
- F: Is that names you gave people?
- M: No. Ja, oh of who I am?
- F: Ja.

M: Ja. So in Bloemfontein people know me as Tia. In Kimberly, people know me as Lizzy, in Joburg they know me as Poison. In PE they know me as Abigail. No one knows Miriam.

F: But were they all symbolic of a particular person, were you different Abigail, different to Poison to Tia.

M: Ja.

F: How different.

M: But not also really. Uhm you see, uhh, no, no real difference. Just different places, different names.

F: Okay.

M: Ja.

F: So street life was about not leaving your identity on the street in a sense?

M: Definitely. And a lot of Nigerians would look for me.

F: Okay.

M: So my mother, oh can I please tell you something?

F: Ja.

M: My mother, my mother, ...[laughing]

F: Your mother.

M: Ja. She one time, this was now when my grandmother was still on her deathbed. She received a phone call from a Nigerian wanting R80 000.00 or they will kill my whole family.

F: Oh wow.

M: I found this out when I was in Bloemfontein. My cousins found me there and said look here this is what happened, the family is pissed, they want to fucken, they want to do this, they want to fuck you up whatever, whatever, whatever, and uhm, ja so, so, apparently now I found out after, I actually, I left from Bloemfontein I went to Joburg to the only Nigerian I thought would be looking

for R80 000.00 in town and uhm that was a hell of a risk and I literally went like a mad person and asked did you phone my mother ...[laughing]

F: Okay ...[laughing] Alright, don't beat about the bush.

M: ...[laughing] I will never get over it, I mean I know these people want to fuck me up.

F: Ja.

M: Because I mean, I stole my, I went to them and I said did you phone my mother. No, no, no, okay turned around and I left. Uhm and uhm basically I just needed an answer and uhm, when I came clean in that year a half, that same year and a half, I came, no no no I lie, now, now, I found out in the beginning just when I was clean. According to my sister, my mother gets very how can I say, weird when you ask about this phone call, like when they were questioning her and when the police came also to question her, uhm she would get up and go to the bathroom and stay there for a while or whatever and come back and change the subject, you know if the family was talking or whatever, she was very weird about it. And when they asked her now, you know what, what did she do, or whatever, she took money from my grandfather and the balance from my uncle, cash.

F: Shoo.

M: In a bag, now these guys told her take this amount of money put it in a bag, meet me at such and such a place alone. Drop the money off and leave. Now I know my mother, she would not do that. She would get there police involved, or she would tell them to go fuck themselves or whatever. Mother wouldn't do that, she wouldn't go alone. Okay she would be too shit scared to go alone. And when they are telling her this then it's like no, but she was scared she didn't know what else to do and you know. And immediately after that or like maybe a couple of months after that, up springs a coffee shop out of nowhere my mother owns a coffee shop.

F: ...[laughing]

M: So I am carrying this thing around to say look here okay mother I know that you have used me as a scapegoat to get money out of your, your father and your brother to open up a coffee shop that you eventually closed down, but it's okay ...[laughing]

F: Your mother.

M: My mother.

F: Imagine that. Well thankfully the lives weren't in danger but look at that.

M: No man. But now you see what actually got me on to this is that is why I moved a lot.

F: Okay.

M: As well, so and that is why I was never by my family, because I made a lot of shit with Nigerians, I stole from them. I would tell them bullshit stories, I would get them to trust me. You know things like that, I wouldn't do the jobs that they wanted me to do and fucken disappear with the money and shit like that. Take their drugs all that. So I would catch on a lot of shit. ...[laughing] so I wouldn't want that to get back to my mother and them, so I moved around a lot, I changed my name a lot and uhhhh.

F: But the funny thing is that's the name that stayed because none of the others are tattooed.

M: This was the first one hey, this is when I started my bullshit. This is when I really started getting gangster.

F: So it's a gangster name.

M: Ja. This was when I really, like if you go to, when I went to Cape Town they were telling me why do you have Poison tattooed there? And I just said, it's just because. They said if you go to jail or whatever like that, they will fuck you up because Poison is a hoer. ...[laughing] I didn't know that. ...[laughing]

F: Wow okay.

M: ...[laughing] I really didn't know that but apparently Poison is a name in Cape Town.

F: Shoo.

M: But I am not that person.

F: So now, what's your name now?

M: Miriam. Masha-Allah [Praise be to God].

F: What does it mean? Do you know?

M: Yoh! It means leader on the right path.

F: Wow, what a strong meaning. [phone rings]

F: In what ways is the present Miriam different?

M: I have truly come a long way from who I was to who I am today. The way that I deal with my emotions today is mind blowing. In the past I would react very boldly and irrationally when it came to dealing with things that either didn't go my way or didn't sit right with me. And when I couldn't deal I would run away. Today I can very proudly say that I have grown. I have grown to such an extent that I know where my responsibilities lie and I know what is expected of me. I do not live for my addiction anymore, I am no longer a slave or tied up at the jaws of doom. I am free, free to live like a person, a true person, one who needs to take accountability when needed and one who feels feelings. The past me couldn't even be trusted with a R50.00 [laughs], or left alone in the house, or even allowed to live in the house. When I walked in, doors started being locked, hand bags were put away, and people put their cell phones in their pockets very quickly. Today I run the family business and have control over all the cash. Today I am a respected trusted human being. Not a criminal, not a low life good for nothing thief. You know, in the past I would like lash out when under pressure, I would be completely senseless in the things I did and had absolutely no care or concern for anything or anyone, not even myself. A total disregard for authority and absolutely no respect. Today, today I am respectful and humble person and have a little bit more patience than before. I have come a long way in a sense that, besides the fact that I shouldn't be alive...I am living! I am at peace with myself and what has happened to me in the past. I no longer blame the world for my hatred and anger. I can no longer identify with rage.

Although the past still haunts me, it no longer controls me. I am free, free from the chains that for many years held me captive. I am one with myself and I know what I want and I know where I want to be. I can finally say that I am ME! Honestly...I wouldn't want to change a single thing because everything that I am today is because of who I was yesterday.

F: Sounds like you have discovered yourself along this journey?

M: Absolutely!...Shoo it is twenty past six.

F: Any questions, anything from your side.

M: Nope ...[laughing]

F: Thank you for your time...

[End or recording]