

100 DAYS IN WITHDRAWAL

THE FULL STORY

ROAK

THE BEGINNING

Since you asked for the rest of the story it only makes sense that I start at the beginning. How I ended up in a rehab facility detoxing and why my withdrawals lasted for over 100 days.

I started using when I was a kid around 8 or 9 years old and I was not a casual user even from the beginning, but this particular story is not about the 20 years it took me to get to that rehab's front door. It's about that period of time specifically.

THE HABIT

Let me first just say that alcohol, benzos, and opiates were not the only drugs I was addicted to when I got there. At that point my daily use was absolutely insane. I was using about 12-20 oxy 30mg's, 6-8mg Xanax, 20-40 shots of liquor, 2-4 of the big somas or Flexerils, 1-3.5g of coke, a few grams of weed, 40-60 cigarettes, and 3 or 4 Klonopin or Valium to go to sleep with per day. A Tuesday would be the lower end of that and the weekends would be the higher end. This addiction ended up costing somewhere around \$10,000 a month just to maintain.

It's funny or horrifying to think about it now that I was only worried about the opiates at the time. I had been using drugs for so long that I wasn't scared of the other stuff anymore, but I had, had so many friends die from using opiates over the years that they still truly scared me. I tried to taper off and I tried to cold turkey that opiate habit, but it was just out of the realm of reality to kick. Even while still using the other drugs.

You have to understand that by that point I had been on opiates for a few years and my tolerance only increased over time. The reason it kept increasing was that there would be periods where I couldn't get the real oxy pills, so in between the pills I would use heroin or fentanyl (pressed pills) to get by until I could get my next round of pills and every time that I would have to use one of the substitutes my tolerance would shoot up.

I also almost died more than a few times when using the substitutes. I kept having a very bad reaction to heroin where my heart would start racing (almost 180 beats a minute) and the only thing that would slow it down was to pound shots of vodka, so I would end up

completely wasted and somehow still in a mild opiate withdrawal. The fentanyl agreed with me okay but I almost OD'd on it several times and it would absolutely spike my tolerance through the roof.

So you gotta understand that I did not miss a single day of opiate use for a few years prior to going to rehab because I just kept putting it off and putting it off thinking that one day I'd be ready to kick the opiates.

THE PARKING LOT

So that brings us to the day I went to rehab. I realized I was in too deep and I just wasn't going to be able to stop without some kind of help. So I woke up Dec. 1st, 2020, around 3 p.m. and did my usual.

A few Oxy's to get out of withdrawal, as well as a 2 mg Xanax. Opiates always made me kind of edgy and the Xanax leveled me out. I was never really getting high on benzos for the high. It was just about taking the edge off all the other drugs... And they're one hell of a hangover cure. Anyway I loaded a few weeks' worth of clothes into some black trash bags and headed to Walmart to buy a few cartons of cigarettes, so I wouldn't run out when I got down there.

I was foolishly under the impression that I just needed to make it about a week or two off the opiates and I'd be through the worst of it. So I drove myself across town to the rehab facility. I used to keep a pill crusher in my car and a full-length straw so I could sniff pills while I was driving. So as I was headed down there I finished another Oxy or two and another Xanax to try and work up the courage to walk in the door. When I arrived I was really second-guessing myself.

I knew what was coming and I knew that this shit was gonna FUCKING HURT. To be honest with you I'd say in that moment in particular alcohol probably saved my life because without it I'm pretty sure I would've turned around and took off. I used to keep a 1.75L bottle of vodka in my trunk. So in the rehab parking lot I went to the trunk and pulled out the vodka and hopped back into my car. I filled a water bottle completely full of vodka and drank the whole thing in one shot.

Now I don't know about you but alcohol had a way of making me feel ten feet tall and invincible. So as I sat there and the vodka took effect my attitude changed from one of abject horror at the thought of what I was about to go through to the attitude that had gotten me through all the hard shit in my life. I wasn't gonna be a pussy and run away from what I had to do to get straight.

So I opened my door, put my feet on the ground and walked my ass into the rehab facility.

DETOX

The first night there they did what you'd expect. They checked me in and checked in all my stuff and gave me a room. Next they started me on some Valium and said that I'd have to wait 24 hours before they could start me on Subutex.

So as you can imagine the first 24 hours were pretty fucking rough. That evening wasn't too bad because I had the vodka/opiates/benzos in my system but by the morning I was already in pretty bad withdrawal. They gave me some more Valium in the morning and it helped a bit, but I realized that my detox protocol was going to be 3x 10 mg Valiums for 3 days and then 5 mg less per day until they were going to cut me off at day 7. The Subutex was going to run also for 7 days which started 24 hours after I entered the building.

By that afternoon the weight of the withdrawal was on top of me. I had been here before a few times when I tried to quit but no matter how many times you go through it, it's still horrific. It hadn't got truly bad yet, but I was already freakin the fuck out because I realized that the taper schedule was probably not even going to keep me out of withdrawal at all, because I used to use 30mg of Valium to just go to sleep and now that's all I was gonna get all day. And the same thing with the Subutex.

I forget how many mg of Subutex it was, but it was not enough to keep me level even on day 1 of taking it. But I got through day 1 and on day 2 I entered the group therapy circle. During that first meeting I realized that my daily usage was higher than half the circle combined and it was a bit of a reality check.

It's not that I didn't realize my use was gigantic, but it was more like I just hadn't thought about it in such a long time.

The next week or so really sucked, but to be honest it wasn't horrific like day 1 was. I felt like utter dog shit, but it was in the realm of reality. I just felt like I had been hit by a truck and wasn't in sheer agony.

As time went on during that week I saw some doctors and a psychiatrist. They wanted to put me on all kinds of meds and even do electroshock therapy on me. I told that doctor he was fucking crazy to want to induce a seizure in a person for no reason and I told the regular MD that I was here to get off drugs not trade mine for his. Both of these statements didn't go over well with them, but at the end of the day I didn't give a fuck.

I was there for me and no one else. I told them I was there so they could make sure I didn't die when I was coming off drugs and I would figure the rest out myself.

DAY 7

Then day 7 happened. The previous night they had given me my last dose of Valium and Subutex and I guess they expected that I would just come right off and everything would be okay. Not even fucking close.

I woke up feeling horrible as usual and walked to the morning meeting. I had forgotten to put my shoes on and they told me to go back to my room and get my shoes. When I sat back down on the bed to put my shoes on, the full force of the withdrawal hit me.

It is so hard to describe what it felt like, but you can think of it like this: getting as high as fucking humanly possible and all the pleasure a human can feel. Well it was just the opposite.

All of a sudden I was in utter writhing agony. My body started convulsing, I was pouring sweat, I was so hot that I sweated through my clothes in a matter of minutes, I started screaming because my bones literally felt like they were breaking, my muscles were no longer under my control and it felt like snakes were slithering all over my body and I could literally see the muscles moving like there were snakes under my skin. You might think that I was hallucinating, but that hadn't happened yet. This was only the beginning.

A bunch of the staff came in my room and found the state I was in and rushed off to get the doctor. They gave me some more Valium and some more Subutex, but it didn't matter. It had started and there was no stopping it.

I think I probably would've needed to mainline about 20 oxys to bring me out of that withdrawal as well as 10 Xanax. They asked me if I wanted a shot of promethazine. I said yes. They gave it to me. BIG MISTAKE.

That shit lit me up even worse and then the hallucinations started. I lay there in that bed for the rest of the day seeing all types of shit I can't describe. I was in pure delirium and agony that I don't have words to describe.

As the day rolled on I eventually blacked out from pain. I lost about 12 hours of time and I have no idea what happened.

THE SHOWER

The next day I woke up completely covered in sweat. The entire bed was soaked through the mattress. I was cold, colder than I had ever been and the physical pain had not let up. I could not get up from the bed. I crawled into the bathroom and turned on the shower and just laid in the bottom of the shower with the hot water running on me.

This wasn't a bathtub/shower combo. It was a walk-in shower with tile walls and floors. I lay there for as long as the hot water lasted.

My sense of time was so distorted I have no idea how long it was, but the shower somehow took some of the pain away. The droplets hitting my skin with such frequency brought some type of relief. It also warmed me back up and it took everything I had to stand back up, but I got back on my feet.

After I got out of the shower I said fuck it. I was leaving. There was just no way I could endure more of this shit.

So I put on my clothes and grabbed all my shit and walked out the side door. I actually still had my car keys in my pocket (apparently they were supposed to take those). In my car I had the bottle of vodka and about 100 2mg Xanax. The first thing I did when I got out there was sniff a Xanax.

I waited a few minutes for it to hit and the amount of relief I felt was indescribable. The hallucinations stopped, but I wasn't out of the pain. It was like a small glass of water when you've been in the desert for days with nothing to drink. It didn't make me better, but it gave me something to stand on.

However, as the Xanax was hitting me, half the fucking rehab workers ran outside and surrounded my car. The head guy came over to talk to me and asked what was going on. I said I was leaving and I couldn't do it.

I couldn't quit everything all at once. So he said he was going to call the cops and have me arrested if I drove off in the car. I was in no state to be dealing with the cops, so I told him I would take an Uber and to fuck off. They got me out of the car and got the doctor on the phone and the doctor said if I stayed, they would give me more Valium for another week. So I said if they gave me 30 mg of Valium right then I'd think about staying. They did, and after the Valium hit me I was coherent enough to make a better decision.

They also gave me a dose of phenobarbital and after that I decided I would stay and finish what I started.

DAY 14

They started giving me this medication called clonidine for the opiate withdrawal. And weirdly, it helped more than almost anything else. It didn't stop the withdrawal at all, but it took it from a 15 out of 10 down to a 10 out of 10.

So I continued through another week of hell. Let me tell you the two weeks I spent in that place felt like a thousand fucking years, and on day 14, when I left it wasn't like I was even CLOSE to being better, but all I wanted to do was get the fuck out of there. So I had been completely sober for 24 hours by day 14.

The hallucinations were back and the fucking walls were melting. I had a headache that puts a migraine to shame and my hands and feet basically didn't work anymore (I'm not exaggerating; my motor coordination was basically gone). So I could not drive.

My parents had to come pick me up and take me home. When I walked out of the rehab, I decided I was never going through this shit again. Not like this.

So I opened my trunk and dumped out the vodka on the rehab's front lawn (probably not very considerate of me, but I wasn't thinking straight). My Dad drove me in my car back to my parents' house. The car ride back was crazy. My nerves were so raw that I could barely stand the wheels moving across the road. When we got back, I gave my Dad the Xanax and told him to flush that shit down the toilet. I rode out the next month at their house.

The seizures started when I was over there. I had a couple during that time. It was the strangest shit ever. I woke up out of a dead sleep to full-blown hallucinations. I was seeing people dressed in Egyptian pharaoh's headdresses and then blacking out and waking up on the floor. It was some strange shit.

I had also lost 25 pounds while I was in rehab. I am 6'2" and was 175 lbs when I got to rehab. When I walked out I was 150 lbs. I think I went even down into the 140s at one point. I was still eating the whole time too.

I just could not keep weight on me for like several months after that. After about 45 days, I was still totally fucked, but the 24-hour-long torture sessions had turned into 18-hour-long torture sessions. I was in fact getting better although I was still in agony most of the day. I didn't sleep for more than 30 minutes at a time for the first 45 days either. What actually finally helped was my Dad got me some CBD tincture and when I started taking that I was finally able to get a few hours of sleep here and there.

AFTER REHAB

After day 45, I told my parents I wanted to go back to my house and ride out the rest there. So they took me home.

The next 55 days were basically spent laying in my bed wondering if it was ever going to end. I got to the point where death seemed like the better option, so I made my Dad come get all my guns out of the house. I kept telling myself that nothing lasts forever and that eventually I was either gonna get through this or my body would give out and I was gonna die.

After that long in that state I was okay with either option. Something new started happening during this period, too.

As I was starting to fall asleep (like right on the edge of sleep) my heart would start racing and I would get the shakes SUPER bad. I would sit up and it felt like I was in a panic attack, and the only thing that would calm it down was to eat a ton of carbs. It was intermittent but strange to say the least.

DAY 100

Finally, on day 100 I broke through the wall. It wasn't like I was better, but the worst of it was over.

I felt like I had literally been crucified. My body and mind were so worn out that there aren't even words to describe it, but it was like something had shifted. I can't really say what it was, but it was like a fever breaking. The absolutely oppressive weight that had been sitting on me lifted. Now this wasn't the end of the withdrawal symptoms.

I entered the next stage - Post-Acute Withdrawal - but at least that stage was manageable compared to the actual withdrawal. Let me be clear that it was only manageable because I had just gone through that nightmare. If I was using and then skipped the acute withdrawal and just went into the post acute withdrawal I wouldn't have known the difference. Slowly over the next 5 and a half years, things got better.

There would be long stretches where nothing changed and then I'd finally see some improvements, but I can say - I made it out. I bridged the gap that so many of my friends died trying to get through. Understand that this is not a brag.

This is me saying that in utter disbelief. I could not do it again.

But I thought that maybe somebody out there might need a story like this. They might be like I was back then and have no hope that it's ever going to get any better. I am here to tell you that it does get better.

You will heal and you CAN make it through.

THANKS FOR READING

If you've made it this far, I'd just like to say thanks for reading my story, because the withdrawal was a bridge I had to cross, but it changed me in ways that never would've happened without it. I accomplished some of the things that I value the most during the last five and a half years while I was going through this. I've got lots more to say and to tell you.

So if you want to stick around, I'll keep sending you more of the story.

Thanks for reading

-Roak