



Sober Paddy

life beyond the drink

Bad things can happen - How will you react?

As you go through life, you will find that bad things will happen to you which are way beyond your control. You will do nothing wrong and yet unfortunate, sad and sometimes terrible things will happen. You may lose a job, you may break up with someone you love or someone you may love can die. Whatever it is, no matter how trivial or serious the situation is, sometimes the only thing you can control is how you react.

How do you react to situations that are bad? Well a lot of people get angry, get emotional or lose their ability to think. I know that what I found easiest to do was to escape from reality and not face up to the bad things. This meant that drink and drugs took over my life. I found that keeping things bottled up and hidden were what made me able to deal with life.

But that was only a short term solution. And, in fact, it was not a solution. It meant that I spent 15 years as an alcoholic and druggie. It meant I nearly lost my sanity and thought about suicide on various occasions. I physically nearly died many times. This all happened because of how I *reacted* to the bad things...not just the bad things themselves.

So my advice to you is that if something bad has happened, talk to someone you can trust. This may be a parent, a sibling or a professional like a Garda. It could be the Samaritans or a counsellor or a very good friend. Talking is the first step to helping you deal with your issues. It is only by talking to someone that you can get the right advice to help you deal with pain.

Remember that every reaction you have in any situation can be controlled. You have the power to control those emotions that lead you to do things you may regret. Talking to someone is the first point.

Control your reactions and don't let your reactions control you.

Who is the Captain of Your Ship?

If you have been to one of my talks you will know that I put personal responsibility at the top of the tree. This means that anytime you make a decision whether it is for something small or something life changing...that YOU yourself are responsible for it. Nobody else has the power to make you do anything, even though it may seem like they do at moments in time.

The idea is that you are the captain of your ship, through the good times and the bad. Even though it may seem like others are responsible for the outcome of events in your life...ultimately you have the choice to influence what you do. You have the power to make a decision any time you like.

So if you decide to go to school, to work, to apply for a job, to be mean to someone, to be nice to someone or to create a business that helps to change the lives of others...ultimately you and you alone are responsible for it.

Life does not just happen to you. If you think you are just going with the flow then remember you are CHOSING to go with the flow. If you accept that life is too hard or that a challenge is too difficult remember you are DECIDING that is the case.

Understanding that I was responsible for myself was one of the most powerful moments in my life. I took back blame, insecurity and irresponsibility when I realised I was in charge of my own destiny. Remember that you are in charge of yourself every hour of the day.

Put that power to good use!

Running away solves nothing

One of the biggest regrets I have in my life is not facing up to the problems I had. Instead of dealing with my brain and figuring out why I was so unhappy, I chose to run away from Ireland over and over again. While it may have appeared that I was travelling the world, a massive part of me was just staying away from the pain that being in Ireland reminded me of.

That pain never left my head when I travelled. All the issues I had were right there in the back of my mind, growing slowly. All my problems just followed me around no matter where I ended up on this great and wonderful world. They were like a little fuzzy dark cloud hovering around in the background. And the only way I could keep them at bay was by self medication...drink and drugs and more drink and drugs.

And please don't confuse running away with real and pure travel. Travelling, being open minded and visiting some of the diverse cultures we have on this globe is one of the most amazing things you can do in life. Make sure you travel. Make sure you visit weird and wonderful places. But make sure you are going for the right reasons.

In my talk I speak about being in places like India, Australia and Greece where I nearly killed myself many times. I nearly lost my sanity at various times. And I became a complete and total alcoholic and

druggie to deal with my pain. The stories which I tell show how fragile I was on the inside and out. I came very close to losing my life and my mind while running away.

Face up to yourself before you run away from yourself. Figure yourself out and don't bring your problems with you.

Happiness lives in your head

This is my favourite idea from my talk: Happiness lives in your head. It does not live in your possessions, in your wealth or in your family. It does not live in your career, in your exam results or in any other external things. One of the biggest mistakes I made over and over again in life was thinking that money or status or other people would make me happy. While they helped put a smile on my face and make things better in the short term, in the long run it came down to something far different that made me happy.

I eventually figured out that it was how I felt about myself that made me happy. If I was happy with how I felt about myself then it did not matter if I was rich or poor, single or married, in college or not. If I could be happy with myself then what did it matter from the outside? If I loved myself no matter what I did or what happened to me, then I would always have that as a protection inside.

And when I say love myself, I don't mean in an arrogant or narcissistic way. I don't mean to be too proud or obnoxious about it...I mean to quietly understand that I am who I am. I mean to quietly say to myself that I am OK, that I am good, that I am a good person and that I love myself no matter what characteristics I think I have.

So say it to yourself right now...I love myself for who I am. Whisper it and then repeat it in your head. Do it again.

Accepting myself and who I am allowed me to change how life crushed me at various moments. I put so much faith in my Dad, the Dubs and external things making me happy that when they left my life, I fell into a hole so deep I nearly did not recover. Remember that. If you put faith in external objects and people to make you happy and then they disappear, what option do you have but to be unhappy?

So love yourself today and don't ever stop doing it.

You can always turn things around

Life can be a really tough challenge. It can be devastating and sometimes not matter how hard you try to do the right thing, you can end up in the most miserable and desperate situations. Remember that if you ever get to rock bottom or even if you are just not happy with how things are....remember that you can always turn things around.

This is the single most important lesson from my talk. No matter what stage you get to in your life, whether it is today, a week, a month or ten years from now...remember that you can turn things around. Never forget that.

The trick is to make the decision to change. Once you make that decision to change and draw a line in the sand, then you can move away from the situation you are in. It will get better. You just need to make that decision and from there figure out what steps, what goals or what methods will help you. But at some stage you will need to say "enough is enough...no more...I am going to change. FROM. RIGHT. NOW!

One final thing I learned which has helped me incredibly is that we all have a story about who we are in our heads. This story goes on over and over again in our deep minds. It is who you think you are. It is the person you believe yourself to be. And a lot of the time that story can be a very negative one. It can undermine your ability to create a new version of yourself.

My wife showed me that I could recognise the story of who I thought I was, change it and begin a new version of myself. This was really how I managed to beat my drink and drug addictions. You see, I used to think of myself deep down as a victim. The story of myself which I had in my head was that it was OK if I drink and did drugs because I had bad things happen to me when I was younger.

When I saw that this was my story of myself, I said that I was going to change it. I created a new story...one where I was no longer a victim. I created a story about me as someone who was confident, sober and going to help people. And like that I was able to shift my mindset and in turn my life. I have sifted it into a completely new world.

You can do it too. Figure out the deep story you have about yourself, Write it down. If you don't like it then change it. Write a new one and be that new person.

You can do this anytime you are ready to change who you are.



Thank you for reading and for being to one of my talks. If you do ever want to connect or talk about the ideas here...then get in touch at john@soberaddy.com. I look forward to hearing from you.