



## The road back

### A life of running away turns into a life of freedom

By Loraine McClellan  
staff writer

A HANDSOME and personable young man, who a few years ago was buying \$500 worth of cocaine every week with stolen money, is now resident-manager for a three-quarter house. He's working his way back into the mainstream of life.

The decision to call for help was made when "I was sick and tired of being sick and tired," said Dale H., who introduces himself that way when he attends anonymous self-help fellowship meetings five to seven times a week.

The 26-year-old doesn't have long-range goals. Thoughts of a career, a job and his own apartment are necessarily pushed aside while he concentrates on building self-esteem, learning about himself and his disease, and learning how to rid himself of guilt.

"It takes a long time to forgive yourself. It takes a long time to get rid of the incredible guilt and the stinking thinking. Things are falling into place now. I still have a bad day once in a while, when the dope pusher pops into my head, but I'm learning how to get through it when it happens."

"I never planned to hurt so many people. I know it's a long way back to dealing with life on its own terms. I'll be in the three-quarter house for as long as it takes. And when I'm ready to leave, I'll know it."

DALE'S DECISION to call for help came at 6 a.m. one morning about a year ago in a Colorado mountain resort after a three-day, non-stop, no-sleep binge.

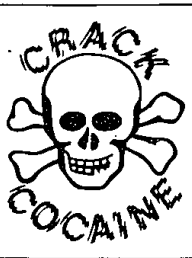
"It was either that or blow my brains out. There was a rift there. That was a distinct alternative. But at least I had come to terms with the fact that I was in deep trouble."

"Maybe the most honest reason for knowing I was in trouble is that the money had run out. I had been stealing money from the company consistently. When I left Colorado, there was \$50 in the account. I was behind in my rent. I owed everybody," he said.

Dale's mother, well aware of her son's disease and well aware she was going to have to wait it out until he decided he wanted help, set into motion the steps back to reality.

Detoxification in Botsford General Hospital, Farmington Hills, was the first step. Dale described it as "five days of constant monitoring, sweating and indescribable depression."

FROM THERE, Dale was



*'It takes a long time to forgive yourself. It takes a long time to get rid of the incredible guilt and the stinking thinking. Things are falling into place now. I still have a bad day once in a while, when the dope pusher pops into my head, but I'm learning how to get through it when it happens.'*

— Dale H.  
recovering addict

moved to "Insight," a 28-day residential program.

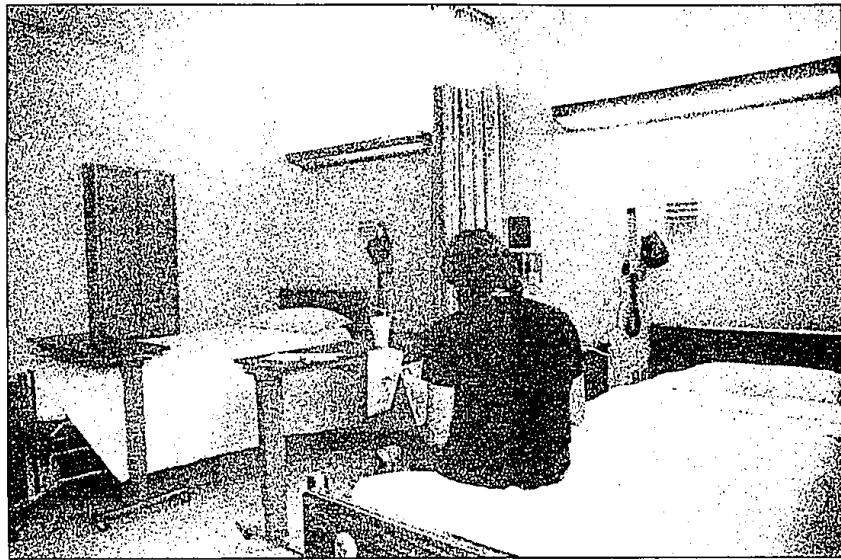
He described that as "a period for learning about the addictive personality. Taking an honest look. Learning that drinking and drugging is all the same."

"It doesn't matter if it's alcohol or speed or marijuana or cocaine — whether it's freebasing or crack or snorting — you are kidding yourself if you think one is different than the other, or one is less harmful than another," he added.

"A drug is a drug is a drug. I learned that I had a disease and I learned what that disease was doing to my brain. Never mind the body. This disease was killing my brain, mind, spirit."

Through the fellowship meetings and his work in the three-quarter house, Dale believes his life of "drinking and drugging" is typical of his counterparts.

SUMMED UP, it was a life of running away from the time he was 12 years old, when he spent the money he was paid to mow the lawn on beer.



Botsford General Hospital runs a chemical dependency unit detoxification program.

photo illustration by RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Dale squeezed through a Birmingham high school with "horrible grades, marijuana, speed and an involvement with being the most popular guy in the class," he said.

Drinking got in the way of football at an Ohio university. After too many missed classes at Oakland Community College, he decided "school wasn't my bag."

In Texas, he landed a job as a bouncer in a bar. He was introduced to cocaine by his employees.

"How convenient," he said. "What a beautiful job I did of setting myself up. No parents to interfere with the highs and surrounded by people like myself. I didn't even have to go to the trouble of hiding."

WHEN THE fast lane got too fast, he said he "sensed something was wrong but honestly didn't know what it was."

He fled to Florida, where he took a job in a private high school for troubled teens where he would be in charge of a dorm.

"I thought I just might be able

to help myself if I could surround myself with the therapists there," he said.

The drinking and drug use continued, in large part on weekend trips to Michigan, where Dale was "back in my old playground with my old playmates," he said.

When he asked the therapists at the Florida high school for help, he was given ambivalence and valium.

"The valium was just one more drug to feed my addiction. I was rude and irritable. I was suffering withdrawal, but didn't have the vaguest idea of what was happening to me," he said.

WHEN HE left Florida for a job in Colorado, Dale left in a stolen car that he drove to the airport. "I was running again. I was in a panic and buried in guilt that I had left without a goodbye and a dorm full of kids unattended. I took all the fear and anxiety and depression with me."

"In the fellowship, we call that the geographical cure. It doesn't work because you can't run away from yourself," he said.

The friend who offered Dale a job in Colorado was one of his "playmates" from high school. "I was high from the time I got off the plane," he said.

Dale described himself as a snorter. "The only reason I never used crack was because it wasn't available. Crack came on the market less than a year ago, after I had gone through detox, and freebasing was too much trouble for me," he said.

"Crack and freebasing are the same. Freebasing is do-it-yourself. Now, the dealers do it for you and it's called crack, just a different name for the same thing."

DALE SAYS nomenclatures are unimportant.

"I don't care if you drink it or smoke it or snort it, what the material or what method is used, it's all the same. It damages the brain cells. The panic and the depression are exactly the same."

"The cleverness, the dishonesty, the manipulations, the constant effort to keep up a good front is all the same. And the hiding, oh, the

hiding, the avoidance of friends and family, the one more high and the laying low, the being cut off, and the bounced checks and the lying. It's all the same," he said.

Dale lives one day at a time now. And he does his best to keep things simple.

By medical standards, he is considered a "recovering addict" because he has passed the one year mark of being drug-free. It will be a few more months before the first crack user who entered Botsford Hospital for detoxification has passed that anniversary.

DALE CALLS his new way of life "freedom."

Talking about a couple of classes he's taking at Henry Ford Community College, he said, "I sit in the front row and got an A in English. First time for me ever. It's a miracle. I'm overwhelmed."

For those "sick and tired of being sick and tired," Dale says: "When you are ready, call the 24-hour help line, 357-3990. The help is not for those who need it. It is there for those who want it."

## LaLeche League

### Experts join to give information, help and support to the new mother

By Julie Brown  
staff writer

FOR A NEW mother who is breastfeeding, a little support from family and friends can go a long way.

"The more support you have, the better," said Susan Klawitter, a registered nurse at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor.

Help on the home front can make breastfeeding easier and more pleasant for new mothers, she said. Suggestions from La Leche League members or from friends and neighbors who have breastfed their children are also helpful.

"Don't be afraid to contact them and let them be your moral support when you decide to breastfeed," said Klawitter, who works as a mother-baby nurse on the maternity unit at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital.

The advantages of breastfeeding are many, Klawitter told those attending a recent program at the Arbor Health Building in Plymouth. The program, "It's Never Too Early to Think About Breastfeeding," was presented by the Catherine McAuley Health Center.

Breast milk is by far the superior food for infants, she said. Although some infant formulas claim to be close to breast milk in quality, those formulas cannot duplicate the ingredients found in breast milk.

BREASTFEEDING provides the newborn with a natural immunity to certain bacteria and viruses, Klawitter told the women at the Arbor Health Building program. Breastfed babies are also less likely to have allergy problems than are formula-fed babies.

In addition to the nutritional benefits for infants, breastfeeding allows mothers and infants time to interact. Breastfeeding can also provide a time of calm and peace during a new mother's otherwise hectic day.

Breastfeeding also allows a woman's body to return to its pre-pregnancy state more quickly, even while she eats an additional 500 calories per day, Klawitter said.

Nursing also offers advantages for family members.

nurse your baby."

The money spent on extra food needed by a breastfeeding mother will be much less than the sum needed to buy infant formulas and equipment for bottle feeding.

Breastfeeding can also be a timesaver for busy families on the go, she said. Unlike formulas, breast milk is readily available and always at the right temperature.

DURING THE program, the women watched a film, "Nursing: A Family Affair." The film covered some of the lifestyle changes involved in breastfeeding, including women returning to the workplace and continuing to breastfeed.

The first six weeks following birth represent the greatest time investment in breastfeeding, Klawitter said. That time corresponds to the weeks when most women are home on maternity leave, thus making it possible to get off to a good start.

"By that time, your milk supply is established."

Breastfeeding is essentially supply and demand, she said, thus, a woman

Please turn to Page 2

