

Case Study—Jim

Jim is a former alcoholic who has been sober for ten years. He is heavily involved with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). He drank heavily for nearly thirty years before he lost his job, wife, family, and home. It was at that time that Jim hit “rock bottom” and decided to enter treatment. His treatment course involved both inpatient and outpatient services with a heavy focus on attending AA meetings for aftercare.

He has suffered many relapses, which on many occasions caused him compounding relationship, legal, and financial problems. Jim’s last relapse was ten years ago. At his most recent AA meeting, Jim discussed some of the trials he experienced with several of the twelve steps. He shared his story during that meeting to several new AA members. These members were not aware of the emotional pain they would have to face to become sober. They learned that changing drinking behavior is only one component of a much larger process in achieving and maintaining sobriety.

Jim recounted how, to become sober, he had to separate from many of his friends, move away from neighborhoods with bars, change his work schedule, and have a family member control his finances. He had particular difficulty with the task of making amends with those he had hurt in the past. Many of these individuals had since died or did not want to speak to him. The rejection he faced caused him to experience a deep level of depression with an accompanying struggle with the urge to drink to medicate his emotions. He would have to face this potential for rejection continuously in his effort to remain sober.