



The Ever-improving Quality of My Problems

by Matt T.

Before I got into recovery, I could hardly imagine what life might be like without my addiction. I couldn't picture a world where I wasn't hiding, lying, or bracing myself for the day my secrets would finally blow up. Even as I began to feel some hope in recovery — hope that maybe life could be different — I still thought the end goal was for all my problems to disappear.

I've come to see it very differently now. My problems didn't go away. What's changed is that the **quality of my problems has improved.**

From Destructive to Manageable

Whether my problems are external — like work, finances, or relationships — or internal — like fear, self-doubt, or depression — they're still there. That's life. But back in my addiction, my problems were catastrophic, soul-crushing, and dangerous. They were problems like living a double life, cheating, destroying trust, crushing the people I loved, risking my family, and spiraling into financial chaos.

In recovery, I've faced plenty of real-world issues: two divorces, bankruptcy, underachieving at work, and all the financial wreckage of my past. But today, my problems are more reasonable. They're problems any adult might have — learning to communicate better with my wife, encouraging my kids, working through fears, managing finances. And most importantly, I can face them without running.

From Avoidance to Growth

In addiction, I was constantly trying to protect myself — to avoid being found out, to dodge painful truths, to stay numb. Recovery has flipped that. Now it's about **growth**. It's not just freedom from my addict; it's freedom to live. To be a dad who shows up. To be a husband who tells the truth. To take risks at work. To be okay with being imperfect.

I still get stressed, anxious, and occasionally down. But I've accepted that I'm never going to be fully "ok" — and that's actually ok. Recovery has taught me honest awareness: who I am, how I think and feel, and that I am not my higher power. I can surrender and trust that life doesn't have to be all under my control.

Daily Recovery, Daily Problems

My addict is still there, always willing to whisper lies. I can never afford to forget that it wants to destroy everything I care about. But today, I don't try to outsmart or control it — I simply let go. I love the idea of surrender as “laying down arms and awaiting further instructions.” Meanwhile, I just do the next right thing in front of me: get up, journal, go to work, do the dishes, hug my wife, talk to my kids, sleep.

Recovery also means working the steps — not just going to meetings, but doing the real work. That's where lasting change comes from. The serenity prayer sums it up for me:

- **Serenity to accept the things I can't change,**
- **Courage to change the things I can,**
- **Wisdom to know the difference.**

Most days, the difference is pretty clear if I'm honest with myself. And on days when it's not, I pause, journal, call someone, and try not to trust every thought or feeling that pops into my head.

Why I'm Grateful for My Problems

Because today, my problems might still frustrate me — but they don't own me. They aren't destroying my life from the inside out. I can face financial stress without lying. I can walk through family conflict without acting out. I can feel loneliness or sadness without needing to medicate it with fantasy.

My problems have changed in quality. They've become the kinds of challenges that help me grow up, instead of the kind that tear my life apart. And that's given me a humble confidence, a peace, and a hope for the future that I never thought possible.

I'm still imperfect, still learning, still growing. But today I can say with complete honesty: the years since I started recovery have been the best of my life. Not because they're problem-free, but because they're finally problems worth having.