

# I found the reason to live through partying!

When I had first heard of MDMA, I didn't think it would have saved my life, but it did. I was always interested in using drugs. I first smoked a cigarette at 12. When I was 14, it was alcohol and at 15, I smoked pot and tried LSD. Mushroom's came at 17 and then for a while I didn't do drugs. My life consisted of work until I was 21. I worked really hard for a famous horseback rider who worked me to the bones not allowing any learning, personal growth or professional development.

I had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder when I was 15 years old. I was put on all sorts of prescription drugs, none of which helped, but I found pot helped. This goodness didn't last and working with 20 hour days, 7 days a week eventually lead me to crash. I returned home to find some stability again and at this time went back to finish high school. I was 22.

Today, it is known by looking at brain scans that my brain has been traumatized not through my drug use, but rather the repetitive and horrible trauma I endured throughout childhood and continuing into my adulthood by a person who was supposed to love and nurture me. I was predominantly physically and emotionally abused and my brain endured a number of sexual assaults (non-caregiver) during this time starting when I was 15 years old.

The only drugs I used were cannabis and hallucinogens until I was 24. I had always managed to keep my use in check and my psychoactive substance use never lead to any harm to my life or anybody else's. I did see a few friends not manage to control their use but all of them eventually got it together and either quit drugs all together or continued using in a controlled manner. Most of my friends used alcohol which I had never quite liked using and I never fit into the drinking scene with the fights and the anger associated with it. I had that at home and I wanted something different.

While I was in university I discovered raves which was all about peace, love, unity and respect (PLUR). I had fallen in love immediately. I didn't identify with the stereotype of the raver, but I did call myself a partier even though I knew I wasn't your average "partier." I have always loved dancing and for the most part that is my drug of choice so I instantly fell in love.

The healing properties of MDMA didn't take their full effect until after a couple times of use as it is a very subtle drug. It has no real "high" that people look for, especially at the therapeutic levels. I ensured that the MDMA I used had a very high quality and purity, but the mistake I had made was not doing it a rave where I was with other experienced users. The first use was unique and for the most part we believed we had gotten bunk stuff. I knew where this stuff came from, it was Amsterdam's finest.

The second mistake was that we went to a bar with people drinking and thus the vibe wasn't there so we left. We all insisted we were sober so we all just went home. I went with a friend of mine, Jane.

I ended up helping Jane talk about how she had a low self-esteem and the trauma of having an abusive mother. Most of the talking was on her end rather than mine, but at this time, I had no idea that the talking was an effects of the MDMA. I had noted a shift in her ability to understand that her self esteem was related to her trauma. Normally Jane was very resistant to this touchy subject but during the MDMA intoxication she had no problem discussing it.

While I was taking MDMA, I was into my third year of a science degree with a focus on the brain and behaviour. I had already taken neuroscience and pharmacology courses so my understanding of the MDMA was likely higher than others. I quickly learned more about its therapeutic effects and knew I had to do it again but in the proper setting. It was months between my first use and my second opportunity. My friends weren't willing and they didn't want to go to a rave, so I had no choice but to beg my brother to let me go with him. I knew it was important to have a safe and appropriate set and setting because of my experience with hallucinogens and the prescription medications I had been on. If the setting is right, these psychoactive substance can also be healing but if one thing is off it can lead to a "bad trip."

The first rave was what really changed my life because I did talk about myself. I don't remember anything that was said, but I remember to my core to this day what I learned that night. I learned that things aren't threatening all the time. People can be caring and compassionate. I was able to relax even in the face of a potentially negative situation arising. I was able to be me. I wasn't worried about what people would think or say. I wasn't afraid of what I would think or say. I was content with life for the first time after 24 years.

I thought that due to my serious mental illness, the drug wouldn't work and even after three hours I insisted I felt nothing. During the entire three hours, I danced but felt nothing that would make me think I was intoxicated. I knew I was happy but I attributed that to having a good time dancing. MDMA took my apprehensions and fears away which weren't healthy for me and were holding me back. Due to the trauma, my fears are powerful enough to set off a cascade that makes it impossible for me to think when faced with fear. I feel apart in social situations such as at a rave or a bar.

The use of the MDMA allowed me to feel safe and carefree. It didn't lead to the inability to tell creepy and scary when you saw it. It just allowed me to face my fears of what I thought of the world and how to fit into it. It allowed me to face the fear of people and that night when I was surrounded by thousands I was able to think, talk, have fun and enjoy the company of others. I didn't have that cascade happen that prevents me from having a good time no matter how hard I had tried to prevent it, until now! It was finally my time to see the world which includes having social connections as it is, beautiful and amazing!

Until that night, I had never seen kindness or unconditional love. I had been deprived of the ability to have a healthy connection that wasn't filled with pain. Its hard to remember anything from that night now, but I will never forget the moment when after three hours, my brother got sick and tired of my insisting that I didn't feel anything so he said to his friend, "Let her know she is high on MDMA right now."

My brother's friend and I walked to another room that was still playing music but it was chill rather than the bombing trance in the other room. There were still lights and people dancing around us while we sat off to the side against a pole that was in the middle of the room which was very close to the dance floor. We looked at each other and very gently she took my hand. Immediately, my head shot back and I made some weird moaning noise. After a minute of readjusting to the what was now powerful waves of what felt like energy flowing from her into me through my hand and back again.

I yelled over the music, "You are right, I am feeling the effects of MDMA. Wow!" Until that point I had not been touched, it had been three hours already but to me, it felt like minutes. Now that someone touched me, I knew immediately the drug was having an effect. I had after all done research on the effects it had already for months. I needed to focus on the effects rather than how good the music was and when this happened, my life changed forever.

Before I knew it I was talking to all sorts of strangers and having a great time. I had never imagined myself acting like that but it was wonderful and of course, then, I was just a person wanting to party not heal from a long history of trauma. I did it all the suckers, gum and even random conversations about personal secrets and the odd make-out session with strangers. It was about connection in the most intimate way and you are literally being in each others shoes. The chemicals of attachment are really only that but without assistance, MDMA just accents them and for me, I needed this.

When I got home as 9 am, I was exhausted and fell on the living room floor. I knew my life had forever changed and I had found something that my life needed. I remember this moment as if it was yesterday and it encompasses the entire party. It was the defining moment in my recovery from my inability to be social. It allowed me to move past the trauma of my childhood and become who I was meant to be without all that damage built into it. It was the moment I decided that there was something worth living for as not everything was ugly. There was beauty in the world.

Due to my brain problems, I have experienced severe suicidal thoughts most of my life and I lacked the ability to fight them. I ended up in the hospital four times between 18-23 due to attempted suicide yet I never received the help I so desperately needed until I tried MDMA. I never tried to commit suicide since then and I am now well into my 30's.

After this moment, I had suicidal thoughts yes, but I never thought of following through with them. I had decided life was worth living because I had finally seen something worth living for. I was 24. I still can't believe it took an illegal drug for me to

have found it but even to this day, I believe it was this moment that let me live. It let me continue fighting my mental health problems and it gave me the power to see that I had something to contribute to this world. It gave me confidence, clarity, contentment and fearlessness which allowed me to move past my childhood trauma and came out on the other side a strong, free and able woman who has much to do with this life.

All I really want to do is help people and then my life would be complete, but when I feel like there no reason to help a person as what goodness is there in the world to fight for, life is very dreary. The sunrise that morning was the first of my life. It was the beauty I had been lacking in my life that makes life worth fighting for.

The moment was brief but it was what changed my life. Had I not decided to intoxicate myself against the will of all of my psychiatrists and doctors, I may not be alive today. This small moment changed my life more then any other. However, I can't tell most people about the experience. I have to deny it and say my change in perspective had been the years of therapy. It wasn't. It was a \$20 pill that I got illegally and without any support even though this pill did hold great risks.

Now at this point, it is assumed I would run out and get high on it as much as I could, but I had already heard the reports of neurotoxicity and needed to know more information. I controlled my use very carefully and after another three times, I reduced my dose to about half of what I was taking. Every time I went to these parties, I went with the intention of talking about my problems. I wasn't much of a dancer at this time because I wanted to connect with others. I had already been dancing for years in bars.

My university path along with connections to RaveSafe in my hometown lead me to become particularly interested in the neurochemistry behind the MDMA and pharmacology which lead to developing of a theory on how to prevent neurotoxicity. This was achieved by researching all the recent research from scientific journals such as Journal of Psychopharmacology and Journal of Neuroscience. It was very exciting for me. I felt this allowed me to prevent neurotoxicity in myself as I never ended up getting that post-MDMA use depression people talk of but rather the opposite. I would feel great.

In the past year, it was confirmed through brain scans that I don't produce enough GABA, Dopamine, Serotonin and too much adrenaline. Even today, I take huge amounts to supplements but without this MDMA experience, I wouldn't have wanted to fight to survive my brain disorders which are confirmed today as being PTSD, ADD and psychosis. The brain scans confirmed that all of my drug use did not do damage to my brain, but the trauma sure did.