

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

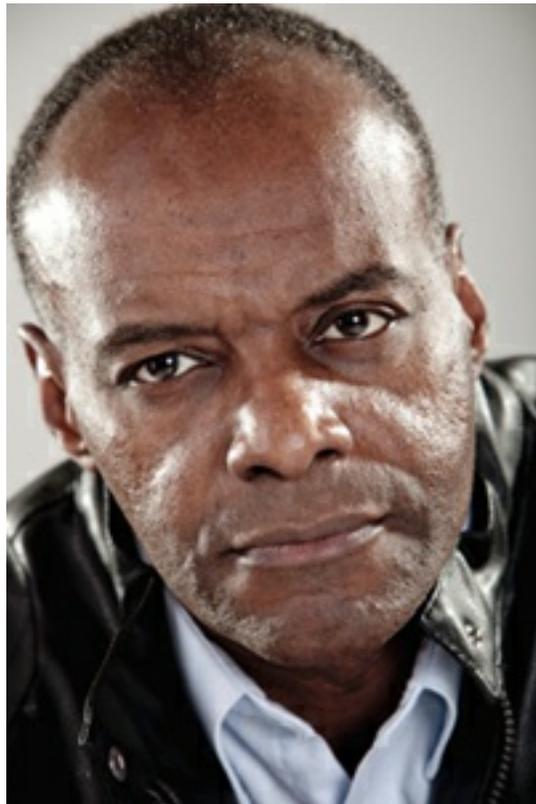
Heroin addiction: "I needed the drug just to get by."



<https://www.drugabuse.gov>

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"Deon" was addicted to heroin. Here, he describes the drug's effects on his life. (This story is based on the experiences of real people whose names have been changed.)



Just after I'd shoot up, I'd get an amazing rush. I'd be on top of the world. Once the high really set in, my mind would get slow and fuzzy. It'd feel like I was sinking into the floor. I'd forget if I was asleep or awake, and time just passed me by. I got hooked quick.

After a while, I needed heroin just to get by. Too long without a fix, and...I can't even describe it. It's like I was dying in every awful way you could think of, all at once. Pain in all my bones, throwing up, chills, and I couldn't sleep for days.

The first time I got busted by the police for buying heroin, I got a short jail sentence and then was back on the street using again.

The second time I got busted, the judge decided to put me in a drug treatment program. I was so angry. I didn't want to stop using. I just wanted another fix.

When I got out of jail, I decided I'd control my drug use better, and stay out of trouble. But there's no such thing as "control" when it comes to addiction. You just want more and more, and will do all kinds of crazy things to get high again.

One day I overdosed and ended up in the hospital. That scared me like nothing had before. I saw that I really didn't have control over my drug use, and if I didn't do something, it could kill me.

The social worker at the hospital got me into a halfway house with a drug treatment program. I live with other guys like me who are just starting to recover from drug addiction. We go to a lot of Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings and classes that help us figure out how to rebuild our lives without drugs.

I also started taking a medicine called methadone. It helps me feel normal and not need to take heroin. I don't know how long I'll stay on the methadone, but maybe it will help me stay clean for good. Heroin has been hard on my body. I have scars all over my arms, and my kidneys aren't working well. But I'm feeling a little more interested in life these days.

I just met my little grandson. When I'm with him, I really believe I can make it without drugs. Looking at me, he doesn't see a junkie. He sees his grandpa, and that's all.

Learn more: [Signs of Drug Abuse and Addiction](#)

Deon began using heroin at a young age. [Read more of his story.](#)

