

# How Being a Drug Addict Made Me a Better Entrepreneur

TIM STODDART

APR 17, 2021

Last week, my friend Brendan told me “Never stop telling your story.”

People need stories of hope and perseverance. We all have fears and doubts. More often than not, those doubts keep us from doing our best work.

I want people to read my story and be able to pull hope from it. I want you to say to yourself, *“If he can do it, then I can do it.”*

**Because believe me, you can.**

So, here’s the truth.

## The Things We Don't Say in Public

When I tell people that I have been sober for 11 years, they always say "congratulations." As if I woke up one day and decided I was going to accomplish sobriety.

It's not like that. You don't get sober because you want to . You get sober because you're going to die, and because you have no other choice.

It was terrible. Absolutely the worst. Addiction brings you to dark places, it makes you do dark things. I'm not going to get into details because I have no desire to tell you my war stories. There's nothing glamorous about that lifestyle. It's dirty and toxic.

But here's the thing, I wouldn't take it back. Not any of it. Not a single day.

**Actually, I'm grateful for it.**

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Everything I have, I have because of my past. My darkness brought me to a reckoning and it taught me things that I would never have been able to learn otherwise.

You can't learn these lessons in business school. You can't read about it in a book. They must be learned by walking through the fire.

Being a drug addict is the best thing that ever happened to me. It gave me a purpose and it gave me an insight that few people will ever have.

**My addiction made me a great entrepreneur.**

Here's how.

## Harnessing the Power of Obsession

My entire staff at Stodzy (with exception to 2) are people in recovery.

Why on earth would I employ a group of people with criminal records and histories of dishonesty and theft?

**I do it for two reasons.**

1. Because I have a duty to give away second chances, in the same way I was given one.
2. Because drug addicts have the ability to *harness the power of obsession*.

My team at Stodzy can perform in a way that your team can't. That might sound cocky, but it's true.

"How could this be?" ... you ask.

Drug addicts can perform miracles. They can solve problems.

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If an addict wakes up in withdrawal and decides he/she needs to get high, what are the odds that they will figure out how to get what it is they need?

I'll tell you right now. The odds are 100%. Absolutely, guaran-fuckin-teed they will figure it out. Not even a sliver of doubt. It would be the surest bet you could ever make.

Why?

Because when people are under the spell of addiction, the *obsession kicks in and turns regular people into problem solving machines.*

**And obsession is adrenaline for the mind.**

I define obsession as *"a thought that overpowers all other thoughts."* It is all consuming. It is the alpha and the omega. It is the king of kings. Obsessed people don't think about relationships, or food, or drinking water, or paying the electric bill. When drug addicts become obsessed with getting high, there is absolutely nothing that will stop them.

Nothing except death.

We know that obsession can be destructive. Everyone knows examples of men and women that have been self-consumed in a pit of obsession.

However, obsession can also be used to create and spread prosperity.

The trick is to learn how to harness that obsession and turn it into something positive.

We all have this magical power of obsession, it's available to anyone, but it comes at a cost.

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The difference between you and me is that I have paid that cost. More than likely, you've never gone so deep into the dark parts of yourself that you've been willing to tap into that power of obsession. You've never wanted something so badly that you were willing to tear yourself and everyone around you to pieces in order to get it.

In the past, this obsessive nature of mine was unhealthy, toxic, sick, and self-serving.

But through years of self-development, soul searching, relentless self-evaluation and service work, I've been able to harness this dark magic and apply it for good.

Today, my higher calling is guided by a spiritual belief that there are good things in store for me. My higher calling is a purpose more than an objective. As long as it is fueled by gratitude, my obsessive nature ensures that I will meet my goal. I have no other option. I'm obsessed.

When I talk about this concept, I'm reminded of an interview with Will Smith.

Will Smith has a monster inside of him. He has learned to harness his obsession. Believe me, I know it when I see it.

*Will Smith > "I will not be outworked. Period. You might have more talent than me. You might be smarter than me. You might be sexier than me. You might be all of those things. You got it on me in 9 categories. But if we get on the treadmill together, there's two things. You're getting off first. Or I'm going to die. It's really that simple."*

- Will Smith

The same is true for the team I've built around me.

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For all of their flaws, their faults, their insecurities and their quirks, I wouldn't trade them for anything. They're super heroes. They've journeyed into the belly of the whale, and they've resurfaced with a better understanding of themselves.

In the end, my drug addiction became my greatest weapon, because it taught me how to harness the power of obsession. There is nothing in the known world more forceful than an obsessed mind.

## There is No Finish Line

One of the challenges of living a life in sobriety is that there is never a reward. There's no trophy. There's no "congratulations, you did it."

20 years of recovery can be completely wiped away in an instant by one bad decision. When that happens, those 20 years of recovery don't mean much. They disappear. Their utility becomes null and void.

I've seen this happen more times than you would believe. I've seen men and women build families, build businesses, build respect, a reputation, and then one relapse clears out all of that accomplishment like a tsunami. I've seen millionaires go homeless in a matter of months. I've seen people who were once swimming in abundance walking down the street in dirty clothes trying to find enough change to catch the bus.

Why does this happen? **People relapse because they seek instant gratification.**

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Drug addiction incentivized me to chase instant gratification.  
**Recovery incentivized me to ignore it.**

Instant gratification is a trap. It is a dopamine hit. It is your amygdala tricking you into thinking that right now is the most important moment you have.

It is the rush of sugar that your lizard brain still craves. It's the feeling of applause that reminds you you're not in danger of being kicked out of the tribe. It's the dopamine hit of likes and shares on social media and dunking on people on Twitter.

All of which are distractions to your higher calling.

As an entrepreneur, I hardly ever celebrate wins. But I hardly ever sulk over losses. Wins and losses are fun, and one might even call them important, but they're irrelevant.

*My objective for each day is to get a little further ahead than I was the day before. My intention is to do my best to add a little bit of value to the world.*

There is no substitute for time. You can't "lifehack" your way through continuous sobriety. It will always take 10 years to achieve 10 years of sobriety.

**The same is true for entrepreneurship.** You can't lifehack your way through building trust, or establishing a brand, or A/B testing sales pages.

Life, recovery, and entrepreneurship are not separated from each other. They are simply different wavelengths of the spectrum.

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The biggest mistake entrepreneurs make is they think in terms of reaching a finish line. They want to believe that they will win something. They worship themselves for reaching a goal and they convince themselves that "as soon as I get to this place, then I will be happy."

You must deliberately retrain your brain to let go of the quest for safety and happiness, and replace it with a quest for fulfilment and service.

I'm not saying that you should never reward yourself. Rewards are great. I fully encourage celebrating your wins.

## **I'm telling you to avoid the trap.**

You'll always feel unfulfilled the morning after the company party. Closing a big deal feels great for about 10 minutes, and then you'll immediately start thinking about the next deal to close. The excitement you feel when you drive your new car off the lot will last you the car ride home, and then you'll pull into your driveway and realize that the feeling was fleeting and you're still stuck with yourself.

This is the battle we all face. This is the daily fight against instant gratification.

You're much better off accepting that each day is another page in your book. There is no finish line. No one gives you a trophy on your deathbed for winning life.

You won't find self-worth in success or rewards. Your happiness and self-worth will be determined by the impact you have on others, and the service you bring to the world.

Drug addiction taught me about the trap of instant gratification. I was a slave to it. It was my master and my muse.

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Recovery taught me how to bypass that impulse, and instead stay focused on making daily progress, without being emotionally invested in the outcome or the expectation.

## Fear is the Only Foe

There are only two motivating factors in life.

### ***Faith and fear.***

Everything we do is determined by what state of mind we are in at any given moment.

Decisions based on faith have no expectation attached to them. ***Faith is acceptance of what will be, and that what will be, is what is best.***

If we are making our choices from a state of faith, then we are more likely to succeed because decisions based on faith are aimed towards serving the greater good.

***If we are making choices from a state of fear, then the choices we make are meant to serve ourselves. Those choices seek to serve the parts of ourselves that live in a scarcity mindset.***

1. Afraid of what we might lose
2. Afraid of what we won't get
3. Afraid of what people think about us

**So, ask yourself, are you living in fear? Or are you living in faith?**

**Addiction is a life of fear.** Fear that you will never have enough. Fear that the real world is too painful. Fear that if people knew the real you, they wouldn't like you.



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Bad entrepreneurs make decisions like addicts do. In many ways, bad entrepreneurs are addicts. They are addicted to the quick buck and they are hooked on the idea of easy wins. They think they are gaming the system, when in reality they are only gaming themselves.

These are the timeshare fraudsters. These are the scam dealers. These are the dream sellers. These are the hacks who are willing to sacrifice their reputation for a quick win in the present moment.

But what happens to these people? Eventually, they are sniffed out, they are exposed and they lose all credibility. Their fearful thinking put them in the exact position that they were afraid of.

*I have been there. I know where living in fear will bring you. It's not a place you want to be.*

**Entrepreneurship is a life of faith.** Because in entrepreneurship, there is no guarantee that things will work out. Everything you do as an entrepreneur is done under the pretense that what I do today ***might*** pay off in the future. It's a sacrifice of the present moment for a possible return in a later date.

So almost by definition, good entrepreneurs live in faith. Faith in something they cannot see or put a finger on. Faith in an idea. Faith in a vision that must be manifested from something that cannot be seen or heard or touched, only believed in.

I've been on both sides of this duality.

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## In Conclusion

All of these lessons have a common theme. In fact, all of these lessons essentially say the same thing.

The lesson of success is simple...

***"Be comfortable with being uncomfortable."***

Success requires you to live in discomfort. Anything worth doing is uncomfortable.

- fitness
- sobriety
- healthy eating
- selling your services and products
- promoting yourself
- raising a family
- having honest discussions with people you disagree with

It's much more comfortable to be fat, to be drunk, to hide in the corner and to scream and yell at people we disagree with and pass them off as ignorant.

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But that's not what we want out of life, is it?

People all want the same thing. We want to be connected.

For me, entrepreneurship is a [spiritual endeavor](#). My businesses give me a sense of connection and the sense of belonging that I was always seeking while living in addiction. This is true for everyone. This is why companies refer to themselves as "families." Because when you belong to a company, you belong to something that is bigger than you. [You belong to a fellowship of men and women who are all supporting each other, all looking in the same direction, challenging each other to achieve a higher cause.](#)

**The biggest difference between people who have success and people who don't is that those who have it decided to live in discomfort long enough to get it.**

When you break it down, that's the only quality you need. Kindness, talent, empathy, leadership, communication, and developing a skill of any kind is all completely determined by your ability to live and stay in a zone of discomfort.

It's difficult, but worth it.

My 10-year battle with addiction taught me as much as I care to know about pain and discomfort, and I'm blessed and fortunate to have lived through the experience.

Tim Stoddart