**Resume of a Person with Substance Use Disorder**

**Reader 1**

“Joe” is 16 y.o. sitting at his dining room table finishing his homework. His 13 y.o. sister and 9 y.o. brother are there as well. Joe is helping them as needed, offering gentle motivation and encouragement. Mom is upstairs folding laundry while the baby sleeps. The house is quiet, holding its breath.

It’s Friday afternoon and Joe is trying to get ahead of homework so the weekend isn’t so busy. He has felt a bit queasy all day and apprehensive about the coming weekend. While last weekend passed w/o incident, Joe knows that the family can rarely piece together two calm weekends, and this year has been particularly troubled with dad’s difficulties at the office. Something is bound to happen.

All the children hear their father’s car pull into the driveway. He’s home late from work. They look apprehensively at one another. Jimmy, the younger brother, anxiously gets out of his seat and heads upstairs. Rachel puts down her pencil and puts on the face she often wears when dad’s around, something between “leave me alone” and “I don’t give a shit”. Listening intently, Joe hears the car door slam shut and his father’s muttered curse. His muscles automatically tighten. Joe wants to crawl under the table and hide, but knows that’s a useless thought. The last time he did that was years ago, and the result was worse than usual. He knows the weekend has arrived.

After a tense family dinner, Joe helps his mom with the dishes and then goes out with his friends. Just that past summer, they had begun going to the nearby woods and drinking beer around a campfire. As Joe and his friends approach the spot, he feels anticipation building. He looks forward to the relaxation and emotional warmth from the alcohol and camaraderie with his friends. He tells himself that he needs this respite in order to cope with life at home.
When he returns home after midnight, everyone is in bed and the house is quiet. Before going to bed, he goes to his parents’ liquor cabinet and pours himself one last drink. He sits in the living room and sighs deeply, letting the quiet roll over him. He sips his whiskey until he feels ready for bed.

**Reader 2**

Moving forward in time, how does Joe’s dilemma play out?

Once he completed college and began his career, Joe enjoyed neighborhood parties, after-work social gatherings, his involvement in community service activities, and relaxing with the other coaches of his son’s baseball league. Work in financial services industry was rewarding , Joe and his wife Marsi, were stalwarts of the community. But, over time, his life slowly became more constricted, and he found himself less involved. He worked longer hours but he enjoying it less. This was very gradual, and with the addition of kids and work stressors, it was easy to miss.

If Joe had looked at his life HONESTLY, he would have noticed that previous activities he had enjoyed were becoming more burdensome. He was becoming more ISOLATED. He was increasingly dissatisfied, even with his wife and kids. And his attempts to relax, including his use of alcohol, were less rewarding and more driven. Of course, he did not see these consequences mounting (DENIAL).

He would also have noticed that his engagement with alcohol (cognitively, behaviorally) was increasing. Joe was developing a relationship with alcohol. He talked more often about it, and he kept his bar at home well stocked with his favorite liquors.
Eventually Joe started to register that something was wrong. Perhaps he woke up with one too many hangovers, or he began to worry about his elevated blood pressure and weight gain. Perhaps his wife or doctor commented on his alcohol use or his generally tired appearance. Whatever the trigger, Joe cut down on alcohol consumption or moderated in other ways. He discovered, however, that he always returned to use. He was unable to maintain moderating. This period of alternating use and moderating lasted a long time.

Joe didn’t want the consequences, but didn’t want to give up the benefits.
Joe’s dad always said he’d quit and never could. Joe has arrived at that same place in his life.