



## EPISODE 71: ALCOHOL, ADDICTION, AND A NEW LIFE

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) What's up real quick. I have to give a medical disclaimer. The information in this program is not intended or implied to be a substitute for medical diagnosis, treatment or advice. You are encouraged to confirm any information obtained from this program or through this program regarding any medical condition or any treatments with your physician, never disregard professional medical advice or delay seeking treatment because of something you have heard or accessed through this program. You're listening to the bipolar now podcast episode 71.
- Speaker 2: [00:40](#) Welcome to bipolar. Now the weekly podcast for doing life on your terms, not the illness. And now here's the host of your show. Mike Lardi.
- Speaker 1: [00:55](#) Welcome. Welcome, welcome. Welcome to a new and completely out of this world episode of the bipolar now podcast. This is the place where we tackle on a weekly basis, the issues and the decisions that are all related to mental health and trying to do life with such a mental illness. And today I'm pumped. I got my buddy Aaron Moore. He's in the house. He's literally in the house. And Aaron, thank you so much for making the drive all the way up here from San Diego. Thank you so much for jumping on the microphone. This is I'm, I'm guessing your first podcast episode ever, ever. And so dude, we're going to, we're going to do it right. We're going to start off with a real easy topic addiction, you know, super easy to talk about. Super fun. Exactly. No, exactly. I'm being completely facetious. Aaron, tell us, like, what are some of your earliest memories of me?
- Speaker 1: [01:51](#) Like let's share about life growing up together on this wild little mountain. Awesome. Yeah. Thanks for having me, Mike. It's I'm excited. I'm a little nervous to be honest, but um, I would have to say that, uh, my first memory of you would be an Mrs. Hanor's art class. Heck yeah. We just said that, uh, or agreed that it was your senior year, my sophomore year. Um, I don't remember. I remember the few of the other people in that class, but you definitely stood out. I remember you being at the front and not at that one table. Uh, always drawn those, those awesome imports I'm in. That was like my first memory of, you know, of you. And I thought at first you were just like this, this dude that sat over there and didn't really do much, but then I saw your little tiny 80 bitty, like hot wheels size drawings. Yeah. And you just free handed them and it was just like, wow, this guy's got some talent. And then, um, yeah, we just started chopping it up and be in high school kids and laughing it, you know, other people's expense probably little bit too much,

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- Speaker 1: [03:02](#) But that's what you did in high school. And you know, he didn't really know any better. And uh, then I think from that, we kind of connected, you know, on and off, uh, with art, I think through art, um, and through Erin. Um, but I think art was always the, kind of the steadfast thing that, you know, you went to Art Center, which is where I initially wanted to go. Um, but ended up going to the, going to college of art and design. Yeah, yeah. Graduated there in 2010,
- Speaker 3: [03:33](#) Which is also a phenomenal school.
- Speaker 1: [03:35](#) Yeah. Yeah. It's a, I mean, to say that that experience was, you know, we can we'll come definitely becoming back to the LCAT experience and get into like the addiction part of it. Cause it was all right. Yeah, yeah,
- Speaker 3: [03:49](#) Yeah. I remember you in that class. I was trying to remember if it was my senior year and it would've had to have been, cause I only had art once. And so yeah, absolutely. I was, I was of the bond mentality with my drawings. Everything was like shrunk and miniature and super hyper detailed. So now I remember, I remember noticing your art right off the bat. You were extremely talented and I love how you've been able to stay with it over the years and continue working and developing your skill. And it's just been a huge encouragement to see you use that talent and, and express yourself. And, and now you're, you know, you're actually able to make a small side living, right?
- Speaker 1: [04:23](#) I mean, it, it puts money in my pay, some bills and uh, maybe some, some fun money. Yes, you're in there. But uh, you know, ideally this is actually, uh, like I said before, an inspiration, you are an inspiration to further my career and the things that I've kind of just held off on for, I guess, lack of motivation or, uh, know how to get it started. And sitting here with you and your studio. When I have a studio down in San Diego, it's like, why the heck can I do it when Mike's doing it? I mean,
- Speaker 3: [05:00](#) Yeah, environment is key. Don't you think? I mean, it's who you around. And if you're not around artists and people who are in production, I mean, it's just, it's
- Speaker 1: [05:08](#) A lot of effort to be creative. And, and one of the things that I've noticed a lot off and on, and that I forget about and it completely, uh, slipped my mind for years after I graduated LCAT was that you need to be around other artists. You need to feed off of creativity. I mean, creativity literally grows. Creativity, feeds it, whatever you want to call it. If you're not around any

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kind of creative, uh, you know, energy, whether it's stuff that you have to force yourself to be a part of over there, movies, music, uh, poetry, literature, other art, museums, whatever. It's just not going to happen. Like you don't, you have to have inspiration coming from other inspiration.

- Speaker 3: [05:59](#) I don't know. I mean, yes, it's it doesn't come from a void. No. Yeah, absolutely. But it also can be like a straight black hole. Every artist knows the black hole. I have another memory of you, Aaron. I remember one day hanging out in my living room as a teenager and you knocked on the door and you weren't there to see me.
- Speaker 4: [06:24](#) You did not come to my house to see me.
- Speaker 3: [06:28](#) You came in, you're like, is Erin here? Erin's my little sister. You heard her on, I think episode seven of this show. And it's like the first time it was the first time when a guy comes over to my house and he's not looking for me, he's looking for my sister. And I was like, Oh my gosh, what do I do with this? Is this okay? Is this legal?
- Speaker 4: [06:53](#) That's fine.
- Speaker 3: [06:53](#) Oh man. I, uh, yeah, Erin was, was a good, is a good, great person. And um, you know, you guys were solid people and friendships that, uh, you know, I built then and still have, um, it's funny though. It's is it, is it kind of sad and messed up that I don't remember that exact instant. No. Why would you remember it? It was like, it was a moment for me, you know, you're just like, I'm just going to go see Erin. Cause I like her and that's I guess, first time for everything. Yeah. Well, so see, after that I had a couple of other friends who were my age, come over and they knock on the door and they see me and they're like, Oh, is Erin here? I'm like, really?
- Speaker 3: [07:39](#) And so what's funny is Erin wound up with an older guy? I mean, he's not an old guy, but he, she wound up with somebody, you know, older than her. And so I don't think that was intentional. I think she just found the right guy and married him. But yeah, that's my, that's one of my memories of you. And I think, I know, I know they came to my house and I was like, we're not like kick it. Cool. But we're friends, but you know, so anyways, so anyways, so Aaron, yes, you are based in San Diego now, what do you do for work? Um, I, long story short became a drug and alcohol counselor, uh, other than our friendship and our creative backgrounds. I think that that's what has led me to

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sit here in front of the microphone. Um, we could have another podcast about creativity someday and all the rest of the stuff that we could, you know, uh, branch into. Sorry about the pen clicks, the pen clicks. I love it. You know what it is, it's hectic to get on the microphone for the first time. My first eight episodes, I wanted to crawl into a hole. Yeah. It was so terrible. And I, you know, I'm a fidgety person and having pens in your hand a lot to draw and whatever. I mean, that's like a, it's a comfort object. So I, my hand grabs it.

Speaker 1: [08:57](#)

You're doing great. Um, so yeah, I, uh, my addiction led me to drug and alcohol counseling after almost being completely, literally taken out by my alcoholism. I don't know how you wanted to get into that. Well, since we're at that part of the story, like tell, tell it to us, like where did the path of addiction start out for you? Well, uh, I never looked at my alcoholism or alcoholism as an addiction for a long time. Growing up it an addict was the addict that society, the stigma gives an addict. Um, yeah, the, the, I mean, forgive me if I'm hitting too hard, but the guy on the street begging for change, you know, sitting in his own filth, whatever it may be just the worst. I mean, we grew up in this bubble of Lake Arrowhead. We knew addicts. We kept them at, you know, arms reach.

Speaker 1: [10:02](#)

Um, we said things probably that were completely naive to what they were struggling with. Uh, celebrities and music musicians we know were taken out by addiction. And so we, we had a different perception. I had a different perception anyways, of what an addict was. Um, but I have grown and learned and opened my mind and heart to the all, you know, countless types of addiction. Um, mine, like I said, being alcoholism, uh, was the alcoholism part was on my radar. I was predisposed to be an alcoholic, uh, right out the gate before I was even, you know, taking my first breath. You could argue that I was going to be an alcoholic or an addict of some sort. Yeah, both my parents were alcoholics. Um, my dad, I remember one time specifically driving up highway 18 on the back of his motorcycle. We had to use geezer glide, his Honda Goldwing.

Speaker 1: [11:04](#)

And we were talking on the, on the microphone and I don't remember where the conversation started or where it ended, but I remember him telling me since I'm an alcoholic and your mom's an alcoholic, your you or your sister, sisters are going to be an alcoholic. That's just a fact. And it stuck. I don't, like I said, I don't remember how or where the conversation went. Um, but that sentence just like burned a hole in my head. And then I just put it in the shelf and like suppressed it for years. And then, uh,

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yeah, my parents got divorced. There was some, some ugly, you know, stuff. I mean, in the grand scheme of, uh, you know, bad marriages divorces that were really wasn't that bad. I mean, it could always be worse. Um, always anything. I think that might be a direction that this message is, is that, you know, no matter how bad it is, it could always be worse.

Speaker 1: [12:02](#) It's something that I believe in wholeheartedly nowadays. But, um, so I knew that alcohol was going to be something that I had to stay away from because of the history, because of what I'd witnessed. I just had to stay away from it. Um, I admittedly smoked a lot of weed in high school, uh, ms. Haner and Gary's class where, where I would, you know, come back to hide and get creative while stoned, and then not every time, but I mean, not, it became my M by when you knew me that wasn't the case my senior year, uh, junior year, senior year, I just didn't care. I, you know, I knew I was going to be an artist of some sort and I didn't need algebra. I didn't need all the other classes that, those two that's just, that was my home. And I always thought that I would always smoke weed and that would just be who I was.

Speaker 1: [13:01](#) Um, and I was okay with that and actually was proud of it, you know, listening to sublime and, you know, live in that mountain pothead played golf too. So, I mean, I was like, I was in heaven fast forward. Uh, that was, I graduated 2001, um, kind of, and I would say about 2004, um, I met a girl who didn't like that. I smoked weed and I was trying to get an actual job while I figured out what art school I wanted to go to. It was hitting up art center and all the, you know, I'm just exploring, building a portfolio. And, uh, because of the job that I ended up getting with another mountain friend, um, at a pass, a drug test. And so, um, quitting smoking pot was actually very, very easy. Um, I didn't, you know, withdraw from it. I didn't crave it.

Speaker 1: [13:57](#) It was just, I put it down and the only reason I didn't ever smoke it again was because of the girl that I was with. Um, and it didn't really serve me anymore. It was just kind of like nothing to me. Um, and then when I did try to smoke it again, I just couldn't handle it. I mean, I don't know what I mean. I guess it just, they got better at growing it or whatever. It just like, I couldn't hang, so I just didn't smoke it anymore, but I started drinking, I turned 21. Um, so yeah, I just would recreationally, you know, have some beers with friends. I remember when I turned 21, I went to the, to the Depot and I bought a new castle and like a Heineken for my 12. So, and it was after going to a class at RCC.

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- Speaker 1: [14:42](#) So I mean, and it was late, so I couldn't go to a bar. I just wanted to buy a couple of beers. And that was my first, I don't want to say my first, you know, drink, but when I turned 21, that's what I did. And then it slowly was just the thing that was there that was legal, that was normal. That society celebrates, uh, on an insane, insane level. When you really think about what society does, not just in the United States, but globally, uh, alcohol is in the hands of every aspect. Universal. Yeah, it's crazy. But, uh, so that girl that I was with turns out that she broke up with me after four years because I was turning into an alcoholic and we'd kind of talked about it, but I was in denial. I had just started going to school at El CAD, super excited to be in Laguna beach, coming from the mountain.
- Speaker 1: [15:39](#) I mean, the show Laguna beach was on TV at the time. Like it was, you know, I was, I was stoked and aye started partying with the other kids. The other artists, I was 26, I think by that time. So I was the older guy coming in that could buy booze for the younger kids. I was doing it to fit in, um, to be cool, uh, ended up moving in with like the two popular guys of that incoming class. Um, so we just became the house to party at beer. Pong was like almost a nightly thing. Uh, either that, or we drink wine and beer while we painted or worked on our projects or whatever it was, it was just, alcohol was a thing. Um, I don't think there was a day that I didn't have at least three, four drinks just as a norm.
- Speaker 1: [16:30](#) I mean, it wasn't literally wasn't even thought about. Um, and then, you know, they're, it's kinda hard to, uh, put like a bookmark in where it was, but I found myself graduating from, from LCAT in 2010, hung over, showed up to the commencement ceremony. Um, I had completely let myself go. Uh, other people I could tell that other people could tell what was going on. They just didn't want to actually say it, but looking back, I mean, I was a mess, like just, uh, just gross. So, yeah, and then I moved to San Diego because both of my sisters had moved off the mountain, uh, after they graduated high school, uh, our grandparents lived in Carlsbad and so that was the natural move for them. So my oldest sister was like, Hey, come live with me in San Diego. It's awesome. And so I did, uh, you know, lease was up at the place in the Laguna Hills.
- Speaker 1: [17:27](#) So off to San Diego, I went, which was only like a 40 minute drive down the coast. Um, and I began drinking the same speed if not more because my sister drank and I was out of the house and I had a college degree and I was going to go figure it out. Um, but I couldn't figure it out. I was drinking too. I was, you

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know, with again, without being, you know, uh, admitting it, being in that denial that everybody talks about with addiction. Um, it wasn't until 2014 that I actually started seeing. And, and mind you too, I'd never lost a job. Never had any DUIs, probably drove too many times, not wasted, not like, you know, recklessly, but definitely not sober, not sober. And I had gotten pulled over twice and had the out of the window thing without, you know, I'd never had to get out of it.

Speaker 3: [18:24](#)

Wow. So I got lucky professional. Yeah.

Speaker 1: [18:27](#)

So professional a functioning alcoholic, actually, how I describe myself to this day, I say I was a professional functioning alcoholic by definition. I mean, that's the only way that I can really put it still to this day. I've never been in a fist fight up here for a reason to visit somebody or not to visit somebody Memorial, but to

Speaker 3: [18:50](#)

We're going to go on Friday to David's Memorial. Yes. Yeah. So

Speaker 1: [18:53](#)

He was actually the only person that I really wanted to beat the crap out of. Um, so there's a little bit of an obligation for me to, you know, help out with the Facebook group and get what I can, because David was, was a good friend, but also the person that I was fine.

Speaker 3: [19:08](#)

Well, and this is the thing about Aaron, you guys is he will help absolutely everybody. And even if his enemy is in somehow need of help, like he will suck it up and figure out a way to do it. And that's exactly what's happening and taking place with this. It's going to be a celebration of his life because I mean, he was taken from us and nobody could, nobody could even see it coming. Like, it's just, when you die in your thirties, that's just very unusual. And here you are. So my hats off to you for doing that, because I know that about you, you will help literally anybody

Speaker 1: [19:38](#)

Well, and thank you. That's, that's something that, uh, you know, I can I'll get to, but, um, it, that's kind of the way that I that's my biggest philosophy now is that if you have the opportunity to help somebody, don't hesitate to at least ask if you can. And if I get a little bit of emotional, you know, absolutely. Uh, I'll, I'll have to like, I don't know, step back or pause or whatever, but there's, there, there came a point in 2014, I'll just have to go right into back to the story. Uh, I started noticing, um, physical symptoms of liver, of something. I didn't even know what it was, but something wasn't right. Had actually moved out of San Diego and came back to rim forest and was

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kind of going to do the reset button. Cause things hadn't been, I hadn't found the dream job that I graduated, art school expensive, just, you know, ridiculously expensive art school.

Speaker 1: [20:37](#)

And I didn't have that job. I was floundering, didn't know what to do. So I moved back to try to get my head right. That didn't help the drinking moved to big bear with a girlfriend that, um, I had met at RCC, um, that ended up going to elk, had to, and we just found each other in big bear. And that was where the symptoms really started popping up. My legs were swelling. Um, I didn't notice the jaundice that was happening because you look at yourself, look at yourself in the mirror every day. You don't notice something that progressively gets worse just cause you see it, it there's just, it's like turning on changes. It's like somebody dimming the lights, which are turning it up. You don't really notice it if you know, they do it paying attention. Yeah. So there was a weekend, uh, where the girlfriend had dropped me off.

Speaker 1: [21:32](#)

I didn't have a vehicle of my own because I drove it into the ground. Um, my grandfather was an artist and had basically I'd inherited his pickup truck and just drove it to, into the ground in San Diego. Cause I didn't want to put the money into the truck because that would have been money that I could have drank literally. So I sold it for \$500. Was riding a bike to work, uh, at an art supply store in San Diego, again, back fast, forward to big bear. She dropped me off at my parents' house and reinforced on her way to visit her parents in Redlands. I am bald as a mother and I had forgotten my nice razorblade to shave my head. So I borrowed one of my moms, you know, the, the orange and white big yes, yes. You know, that we grew up with right. Uh, to shave my head. And that was a bad idea. Actually. It was probably, I want to do a piece of art just on that. Razorblade like a performance.

Speaker 4: [22:32](#)

What would it be? I mean, no, like now we're talking to art.

Speaker 1: [22:35](#)

So I did a painting and I have an Instagram that has, uh, at least partial image of that on there. Um, that I did for my first solo show in La Jolla, you know, humble brag,

Speaker 4: [22:48](#)

La Jolla.

Speaker 1: [22:49](#)

Yeah. Uh, that actually, my mom has here in Rimforest now. Um, but it, so I, I use that razor blade to shave my head and I have a little mole right here on the side of my head. Some, some little thing. It wasn't a mole. It wasn't, it wasn't a zit. It wasn't a mole.



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It was just like a bump. Yeah. I had never hit before. And because of my health situation with my liver turns out, um, I nicked it and it wouldn't stop bleeding. I had been drinking that night and I don't think it would have mattered. I mean, alcohol thins, your blood so that didn't help. But I feel like it would have happened eventually. And if that didn't happen, if I didn't cut my head shaving at home with my mom, who's my number one supporter. My rock would have, you know, I it's, she was the one that, you know, and family had pointed things out and said, what's going on with your legs? Like, why don't you don't look, are you feeling, you know, and there'd been some comments, but nobody wants you can't tell an alcoholic alcoholic. That sounded weird that they have a problem while they're drinking, because it's just like asking for a fight, just doesn't work. So it was a delicate thing. So, uh, she put her foot down the best that she knew how and called my dad,

Speaker 4: [24:06](#)

Who

Speaker 1: [24:08](#)

Is the epitome of the, you know, Oh, I'm going to tell dad you're in trouble. Like you just, you didn't want dad to intervene. You know? So she called my dad and said, you need to take your son to the hospital. I didn't have health insurance of any kind. I hadn't seen anybody in years just because I didn't have, you know, no reason, no reason to, I was fine. Didn't have any problems, no problems then. So she, you know, in my head bled, we wrapped it with ACE bandages towels. Like it just bled for probably I want to say cut it at, I don't know, 10 o'clock at night. And it probably was still bleeding at eight o'clock in the morning. So she called my dad. He came, he rushed over pissed off. And I can't even describe

Speaker 4: [24:53](#)

The level of justice,

Speaker 1: [24:56](#)

You know, disbelief and anger. Cause he thought it was something else. He thought I was, you know, shooting dope or something. He didn't think that it was alcohol and weed. We drank together for years and he became, you know, a drinking buddy quote unquote, which is again another side story. But uh, he took me to, I couldn't even bend down to tie my own shoes cause I was so distended and full of fluid and I, and he was sitting there watching me try to put my shoes on and tie my shoes and I couldn't do it. So he had to help me tie my shoes. So it was bad. Like I still didn't know what it was.

Speaker 4: [25:31](#)

So,

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- Speaker 1: [25:33](#) Um, and again at still to this point it had nothing to do with alcohol. Like that's how bad and delusional the addiction is. Is that even when you find yourself in it, um, you're still in denial because you've never had a problem. You've never had a DUI you've never been arrested. You never get in a fist fight. None of that stuff. I had never, at that point even had a parking ticket. Like I, you know, I was, uh, I could use a lot of words, but I just, I was a, you know, functioning alcoholic. And uh, up until that point, that was the worst thing that had ever happened to me. And he took me to the hospital down at, uh, in Colton, at Arrowhead regional and you know, chewed me out the whole way. And I was, you know, a mess emotionally because I was scared. Yeah. Had, had drank my last drink before he showed up to pick me up. I had one Mike's harder lemonade in the refrigerator and I said, screw it. You know, I might as well drink it. I mean, and I didn't know that that was going to be my last one. I probably would've had a nice scotch or something kinda went out like
- Speaker 4: [26:36](#) [inaudible]
- Speaker 1: [26:40](#) Know that's part of you own your story. So yes. My last drink was a Mike's hard lemonade. Yeah. Wow. Yeah. So, and it didn't do anything for me. It's like, I mean, couldn't feel it cause my tolerance anyways, I walked into the ER and uh, stood behind, I think like one or two other people in a full ER waiting room. And the nurse at the desk looked at me and looked me up and down. And she walked kind of like your countertop at your walked around, uh, the desk. And she looked at me in the eye and then she like poked my belly and she goes, hate to tell you this, but it's your liver. And you're going to be here a while. And she handed me a clipboard with a bunch of papers and a pen. And she asked for my insurance and I said, I don't have any insurance. And so she threw another clipboard on top of it and said, here, go have a seat. And my dad sat across from me just with the
- Speaker 5: [27:38](#) Just worst grill. Like, yeah,
- Speaker 1: [27:43](#) I, I can't even do it still. I mean, it's burned into my head, but I still can't describe it. Right. And I was just, that felt disappointed in myself and him and let everybody down and still didn't know what that meant. So I'm filling out the paperwork and you know, they finally come over to me and I'm still filling it out and filling out medical paperwork and all this stuff. And luckily, you know, by the grace of God, I only made about \$7,500 on paper that year. So I qualified and that's how it's paid for everything. And

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so they take us through the ER. Yeah. So they, you know, they plugged me into an IV I guess, and a bunch of other things and wheeled me into a room. And I was there for, I believe that that was, so that was, that was November 17th of 2014 was my last drink on the day that I went into the hospital. Um, and they told me right off the bat, clear as day that if I ever drink again, if I want to live, I can, I can't ever drink again. If you drink again at all, you're going to die.

Speaker 5: [28:50](#)

Just simple.

Speaker 1: [28:52](#)

And it really only took me one or two times for that to S you know, sink in for me to quit. That was actually with all that said, and for 11 years or whatever of drinking every day around the clock, maintaining that buzz, that was the easiest part. I knew that I had done it to myself. I knew that with that predisposition, that I didn't understand at the time, but I do now that I, I, I believe in, but I also have to like put an asterisk by it because it's like, we all make our own choices. If I knew that it was something I had to stay away from, I obviously didn't do a very good job at it. So yeah, I was in there until just, I think before Christmas of 2014 and was doing better, had lost a lot of muscle mass.

Speaker 1: [29:42](#)

So I had to go to physical therapy up at mountains and, um, was doing, you know, it was doing good. Still hadn't even seen a hepatologist. And it was in April, I think, April 3rd or April 4th, which was my grandmother's my mom's mom's birthday. Uh, just woke up in the morning and I could tell I was catching a flu or something. And they know that when it was one of the biggest things was if you feel sick of any kind, if anything is wrong, come back, just check yourself into the ER, like you can't mess around with anything, your liver just isn't working. So it's, you just don't mess around with it. So I told my mom, mom, I don't, and she starts, you know, not panicking, but if anybody knows, my mom knows how she is. And so she goes into, you know, a hundred percent mom mode.

Speaker 1: [30:33](#)

Yeah. Fix it, mode, fix it mode. Um, and so she drives me over to, and I was born at that hospital too. So it was, you know, there's like this kind of circle of life, you know, I, um, ironic, I don't know way that it kind of all panned out, but checked in there. And, uh, they did what they could do. Couldn't do enough in our small little hospital. So they ambulated me to back to that hospital in Colton. And the part that I'll never forget about that is that my mom followed us in the ambulance. I could see her following us, which just tore me up. Just knowing that my mom was watching

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her son, her baby, you know, in an ambulance, going to the hospital and she wasn't going to be coming to the hospital. Like she just, it was just, Hey, it was the worst.

Speaker 1: [31:27](#)

So my leg, since they were so swollen and full of fluid, one of them literally like popped open. Like if you can imagine a sausage in the microwave just like popped open and it looked like a bullet hole, just, I must have bumped it against something, the bed getting. Cause I was able to walk and get around and they let me out for walks. I would go out and smoke cigarettes in front of the hospital while I was basically dying of end stage liver disease and cirrhosis, they would still allow me to go smoke. Um, which is probably why I've had such a heart, another reason why it's been, cause it's like the last crutch. It's what it means to you. Yeah. Well it's what it means to me. And it's just, it's, you know, nicotine tobacco is just, it's like heroin, you know, some people talk about heroin being easier to quit than nicotine.

Speaker 1: [32:14](#)

And I've seen it, you know, working where I work, people get off of heroin and still smoke for years. But so that was April a couple of weeks later, uh, where I had gone septic. Um, so there, because of that wound in my leg, uh, we don't really know. There's no way to, to find out or whatever, but, um, I'm gonna guess it was like a staff infection, uh, that my body couldn't handle. So that now is an infection in my blood, which is sadly and its own. Even if you have a healthy liver. So I was in a bad way. Um, there's a thing called the meld score. It's a, I've looked it up. I can't remember what it's, it's something, something liver disease. It's like the rating scale of how badly you need a liver. I think I came in around a 30 something mid thirties and quickly went to a 40 out of 40, um, along those along in that, in that I, and I remember his face, but there was a doctor that came in again, still hadn't even seen a hepatologist, which was just a liver specialist.

Speaker 1: [33:23](#)

His name was dr. Anomaly. Huh? Yeah. And I finally was able to find out the spelling and it, cause I want to like find this guy and thank him, but he was a doctor at Cedar Sinai in Beverly Hills. And he basically intercepted me from Arrowhead regional and had me transferred in the middle of the night. Cause you were maximum urgency as I was. Yeah. And Arrowhead regional doesn't obviously handle transplants in Cedar. Sinai is like the top 10 ranked in the nation and one of the, probably top three in California. Right. Or even on the West coast. And uh, there was a lot of experiences in there that, you know, I'd love to talk about with anybody that has any, any of this too. If anybody

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wants to reach out and talk about this more, I'm totally open for that. But, um, there, uh, there's a thing in, I guess, liver transplant, folklore, um, and what most hospitals tell people is that you, they won't even consider you to be put onto the transplant list until you're six months without a drink.

Speaker 1: [34:35](#)

I received my transplant May 18th of 2015, which was six months and one day after my last drink. So like I was bad. I mean, if that's like a Testament to how close it really could have been, the transplant was eight hours long. I remember the anesthesiologist name, not his name. I remember his face and his tattoos. Cause he was covered in tattoos, which I thought was cool. He asked me what kind of music I liked. He was super friendly. I told him I liked some old school hip hop, like, you know, Beastie boys and run DMC. It was just, you know, I liked all kinds of music, but that was at the time, my favorite and still is a favorite. But when they rolled me into the operating room, after they told me that they had a match, uh, they had, they had two other matches.

Speaker 1: [35:19](#)

The third time was literally the charm. And uh, he, the music that they put on was, um, walk this way was what I went out to. You know, they put me on the metal table, but as Nate, you know, which is interesting place to be after. I mean, there's so many different, you know, humbling experiences, but that was it. And I was about to get opened up and get a new liver. And that was, I mean, I just was completely surrendered to that. I mean, there's nothing I can do. Literally the head of transplant, uh, at Cedar Sinai told me after me constantly telling them, I guess I don't have a choice. I don't have a choice. I don't have a choice. And he stopped and he like put his clipboard down one time and he was like, Aaron, there's always a choice. You always have a choice, no matter what life brings, you always have a choice which stock and I believe in, and it's true.

Speaker 1: [36:18](#)

I could have fought my way out of that hospital and not done what they told me and not received the transplant and died. That's a choice. So I, you know, I was there on the table and remember that light at the top and they just talked me through it. And next thing I know, I woke up, you know, time, lapse, time warp to, you know, probably 10 hours later feeling great. Instantly felt like a champ. I mean, it was insane. I didn't realize how bad I felt, because again, it just was crept on. Um, but I felt like a million bucks right away, groggy, sleepy, sore kind of, well, not sore. I was highest cause I was on Dilaudid and all these different things, but I felt good. And um, yeah, so I was discharged, um, May 30th, 31st,

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- Speaker 5: [37:12](#) So pretty
- Speaker 1: [37:13](#) The fast and then came back up to the mountain, uh, to recover at mom's house mom and my stepdad, Gary who's, you know, both of them just, I wouldn't have made it without the two of them. And then my sisters and my dad and you know, all my sports system, but um, the next possible thought, you know, was what, what do I do now? What's the what's what step do I take? Cause nothing's worked up until this point. So I gotta do something different and watching a lot of hockey playoffs were on throughout my hospital stays. And I literally say that kids, I believe that hockey saved my life. And during, when I played as a kid up here at the ice castle. Yup. Uh, that was through my parents' divorce. Uh, saved my life again. When I was in the hospital the first time, um, the playoffs were on and the day I was discharged, they lost game seven to the Blackhawks and I wanted to stay in the hospital to watch the game, but I saw that they were losing.
- Speaker 1: [38:11](#) So we left, I left wearing a ducks Jersey, mighty ducks Jersey. I don't know why that's relevant. It's just a huge part of who I am. So I guess, yeah. Um, yeah. And so recovering at home, um, 2015, watching the hockey, watching movies, seeing the commercials come on to be, to go into drug and alcohol counseling. Um, I started researching and I couldn't physically go to school. So I found one online and started studying, got the book, started reading. And then about a year later I got a mountain friend again, would come by and check on me and see what I was doing. I knew what was, what was going on, got me a job. I thought it was an internship, but it turned into a job. God, the universe, the higher power wouldn't allow me to find a room for rent anywhere in San Diego, until I had a job I literally sent, I don't know, 50 emails or more for any room in San Diego just to get back out of the house.
- Speaker 1: [39:09](#) Cause I started starting to go nuts, getting the cabin fever, but it didn't happen until the day I got a job. I got a studio, which I'm still in, down there now. So everything circles back and happens. It's super cliché and it's kind of annoying, but dude, everything happens for a reason. Um, I was recently, you know, I've worked there for four years. Uh, this July was four years. Um, and for reasons that I won't get into, you know, again, something happened where my liver transplant situation, uh, led me to be placed on leave because of COVID uh, with my immunosuppressed state that we're all constantly be in. Right. Um, I'm, you know, as you know, coming over here, I had to ask you, you know, Mike, you've been safe, man. You've been

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- wearing that mask. So I used to my ability, I mean, that's all we can do is our best. And I, like I said, if I didn't trust you, I wouldn't be sitting here with you in the first place. Yeah. Um,
- Speaker 3: [40:08](#) And we just naturally social distance on the mountain. It's just low population. Yeah.
- Speaker 1: [40:13](#) And being outside. Thank God. It's summertime. It's summertime. Yeah. Yeah. Um, so here I am. Uh, I think I, I asked you about, I mean you came over that one time when I was house sitting for a neighbor and we watched the hockey game of pizza. Um, and that was before you started, I think you, I didn't even really know much about your story then. I mean maybe a little,
- Speaker 3: [40:35](#) I wasn't so open about it. That's for sure. Yeah. Yeah. And I do clearly remember that. That was a good time of reconnecting. Yeah.
- Speaker 1: [40:42](#) I remember the hockey game. I remember, um, you know, just, it was cool to hang out with you for the first time in a long time, then I got a membership at the gym that you're at now. Right. And that's where I walked in and I was like, Maya, what's Mike doing here? Why are you wiping? And that was a big part of mine.
- Speaker 3: [40:59](#) The recovery. Yeah. You know, that was a big part of me getting back into the actual real world. Yeah.
- Speaker 1: [41:04](#) Yeah. So I think, you know, after I talked to you for a while and you said you had a podcast and I was like, Oh, I want to talk about addiction sometime. And really it's I guess, to be selfish, it's an excuse to relate to a bigger audience, to, like we said before, we started to maybe identify with somebody out there that, uh, is living it or, you know, is headed down that path or know somebody that is, and doesn't know how to help or it may be, you know, I mean, I think that's what spoke to me when I was recovering was that I have to do something to help the next guy to be of service. I mean, it's an AA. Yeah. All over the place. It's a, you know, I, I sadly don't, uh, subscribe to AA in the literal sense of, you know, their books. Um, I believe that it's a, it's a great, you know, guideline to live a good life in a, in a productive member of society and that, um, yeah. I, I just, I don't preach it. I can't, because I didn't, I didn't did work the program to get sober. You know, I had no had no choice, but there I go again saying that, um, it's just, uh, I didn't need it, I guess, to stay sober.

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- Speaker 3: [42:23](#) Now you guys know where Aaron's coming from. And I chose him to be on the show today, not because he has experience with bipolar disorder, but because it just demonstrates very vividly where alcohol can take you. And we, of course can't address every aspect of addiction in a single show. That's less than an hour. It's just not possible. In fact, today we had some extra material. We were going to bring a third voice onto the show from a listener who shared with me an incredible story, and we're going to get to her in a future show. And I definitely want to have Aaron back on this, but I just wanted to hear where it can take you. And maybe if you could find some similarities in your journey and where you're at, but he's dedicated to a new life that is very obvious and he's dedicated to helping others who are in whatever point they're at on that path to a new life.
- Speaker 3: [43:11](#) And so I couldn't be more pleased and honored to have you with us on the show today. Thanks for having me. It was totally incredible. And we will definitely kick open more of these episodes whenever you can come visit the mountain or actually look forward to visiting your place down in San Diego. So this is not a one and done type of show. We'll be multi parts to addiction. Um, our story that we were gonna introduce today, introduce cigarettes and also marijuana, uh, in addition to more, more illicit drugs. And so, um, we'll, we'll open that door, uh, on a future episode. So let's just, let's take it from, from just what you've shared today. Aaron, what do you think is the whole big idea of your story? Like what would you want to leave somebody with? Like, what do you think it all boils down to just getting to this point and you being who you are and you knowing what you know, and you experiencing what you've been through, what what's like a big takeaway for our listener today?
- Speaker 1: [44:06](#) Uh, I think, I mean, in, in what I said, uh, I think that what dr. Nissen said at Cedar Sinai was that we always have a choice. Um, we can choose to stay in our addiction. Sure. It's an addiction. It's, we're powerless over it, but you always have a choice. Always can reach out. It's, that's a, that's a tough one, but I believe just reminding yourself that you do have a choice, surrendering, surrendering, excuse me, to just being an addict, I'm just an addict and this is the way I'm going to be forever as a cop out. Uh, I think that you need to make a choice. Um, and as cliché as it sounds, everything happens for a reason and you're the depth of wherever you're at or the height of wherever you're at, isn't where you're going to be forever. Um, if you make the right choice, which we all hopefully do our best to do



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so, um, we get to that peak and we have to just step out and take each day as it comes.

- Speaker 1: [45:18](#) And yeah, I don't really know if that even makes any course. It makes sense. I think a choice is one of the greatest parts of being a human being. It means we're not stuck and bound to these patterns of destructive behavior. We have a way out and we can choose it. Now. It doesn't mean it happens immediately. And so that's what I want to get to with next week's episode. Next week, we're going to talk about struggle on episode 72 and struggle as odd as it sounds is a choice. I've had many people tell me this and I get irritated every single time I hear it. But the reality is it comes back to exactly what you said with today. Like there, it's not a death sentence, it doesn't end right away, but you're living proof that you can be healthy. You can be happy, you can be productive.
- Speaker 1: [46:05](#) And I think that matters more than, you know, so Aaron, thanks for being on the show with me. Uh, we're having next week, we're, we're going to talk about struggle. We're going to kind of identify it. We're going to try and figure out some principles for plotting a course of action. And so if you're in like the shoes right now where you're saying, you know what, I just, I there's too much at stake. I can't afford to lose it. Like that's, if that's on your mind, like you just, yeah, I'm right here with you just know that. So I'll share all about it in the next episode. You don't want to miss it and I will see you here. Same time, same place. Adios.
- Speaker 2: [46:44](#) Thanks for listening to the bipolar now podcast at [www dot mike lardi dot com](http://www.dotmike.lardi.com).