Sobriety's not about beating a previous high score
Posted by Watson - 04 Oct 2015 08:25

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Broadly speaking there were two types of computer games I used to play as a kid.

In one type you play as a character, fighter jet or something similar and you play a series of levels. You start out with 100% health and if you get hit by the enemy you lose some of your health until you lose a life. The game starts off easy so you can get through the entire level without being hit once. However as it progresses you tend to get hit more and more. The only thing that matters though is getting to the end of the level. At the end of each level you can recharge and get full health again, ready for the next level.

Then there's the other type. In this game you play as a fighter jet moving through enemy air space. Again it starts off easy and gets progressively harder. The difference is that in this game there are no levels. There is no end point, you can never finish the game. You keep going until you get shot down. The aim of this game is to try and beat your previous high score.

For a long time my experience with trying to get sober was like playing the never-ending computer game. It starts off easy and get progressively harder. You start off with 100% health and every time you get a lust hit you lose a little bit until you lose the game. It's not a game you can ever win, you just keep going until you get shot down. The only goal is to try to get a little further than the last time.

That's what sobriety was like. All my effort was going into trying to stay sober a little longer than the last time. "Oops I lost it at 21 days, let's see if this time I can get 25 days."

It's very disheartening to put so much effort into a game you can never win.

There is another way. It's a game with levels. It's not possible to get through the entire game without boosting your health levels. The designers never expected you to. That's why the game is broken down into levels. If you can get to end of the level, you can always get back to full health.

The game is winnable, but only if I take whatever actions are necessary to get back to full health at the end of every level. In other words, one day at a time.

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