

# Alice Crowley 'Connect with someone YOU TRUST'

SHE'S BATTLED ABUSE, ADDICTION AND DEBT - NOW SHE'S FINALLY FREE

She was 9 years old when she was first introduced to marijuana by a family friend. By the time Canadian-born Alice Crowley was 11, "I was a blackout drinker," the author tells WHO. "At 15, I was waking up in the centre of a park, in the middle of winter. It got really bad through my teens."

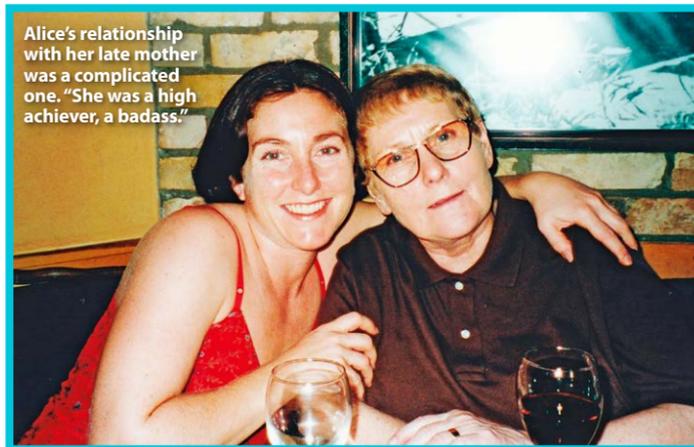
Now 51, Sydney-based Alice has clawed her way out of her addictions to alcohol, marijuana and prescription medications, as well as debt, and is on a mission to help others beat the same issues - and the financial implications that can come with dysfunction. Her self-published book, *On The Way To Wonderland* (alicecrowley.com), chronicles how she got well - eventually.

For Alice, things got a lot worse before they improved though. When she got to university, she was smoking "a fair bit of pot" and had "started hitting the prescription tranquilizers and sleeping pills pretty hard". She says, "I was also prescribed Ativan for anxiety and I remember thinking, 'These are amazing.'" In her early

20s, Alice went to work in Japan to help teachers with their English. Despite it being an amazing opportunity, Alice says that she was "all over the place because I was on so many pills and drinking so much". At 24, she overdosed in Kyoto and ended up in a psychiatric ward. "I was anaesthetising my anxiety. I wanted out," she explains. She was sent back to Toronto.

A year later, Alice consumed "a couple of bottles of tranquillisers, and alcohol" over the course of 24 hours and went into an acute dystonic reaction, "which is very often deadly," she explains. She maintains that this time, however, she wasn't trying to end her life. "The nurse said, 'Were you trying to kill yourself?' And I said, 'No, I was trying to relax.' I realised then that I had a massive problem because if you're not relaxed after tranquillisers and two bottles of wine, when will you be? That's when I started doing a bit of light psychoanalytical psychotherapy."

Alice's addiction issues stemmed from her dysfunctional childhood. "My late mother was a violent drunk and my father drank also." Alice also experienced sexual abuse by a family member, who threatened, "If you tell anyone, I'll kill you." She was just 4 at the time. By the time she was 8, Alice found the immense courage to confront her abuser. "Kill me, but I'm not doing another night of this. It stops now," I said." She adds that even though the abuser backed off, "my anxiety was always there. I never felt safe



Alice's relationship with her late mother was a complicated one. "She was a high achiever, a badass."



Alice with husband Martin at a bar that is owned by his relatives in Austria in 2010.

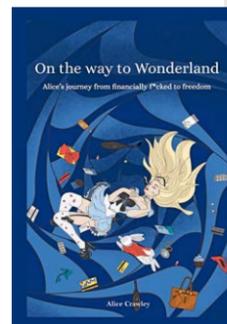
**"You are not alone"**  
- ALICE

enough to sleep". Leaving for university in Nova Scotia, Canada "as early as I could, at 17", Alice studied philosophy before leaving for Japan in 1996. While she continued to work, beginning her career in corporate coaching, she describes herself at this time as a "high-functioning addict". It was around this time that her financial problems started, too.

When Alice came to Australia in September 1999 to "chase the party", her debts increased. When she met her now husband, Martin, in September 2001, she owed \$100,000 dollars in Canada and \$85,000 dollars on Australian credit cards. "I had creditors threatening to notify Interpol about me," she admits. "It was awful." To compound her issues, Alice was addicted to exercise. "My doctor told me to stop running and I said, 'I can't do that.'" So the doctor referred her to an addiction specialist. Yet, it was when her partner issued an ultimatum - to get completely clean or lose him for good - that she finally made changes to her lifestyle. "That was a really powerful turning point for me."

In 2004, Alice threw herself into two stints in rehab and eventually kicked her addictions to alcohol, speed, tranquillisers and sleeping pills. Nowadays, Alice lives in Sydney with husband Martin, 57, and works as a culture transformation leader, author, speaker and financial mindset coach. "I'm very blessed. I get up early and meditate. I journal and I grab a big coffee," she says. "I work for a big financial institute, and in my own private practice coaching young people to achieve their goals."

Alice advises, "Reach out for help, connect with someone who can remind you of the limitless human being you are. When I was at an emotional, financial rock bottom, it felt hopeless, but getting help changed my life."  
• By Jodie Wolf  
**(On The Way to Wonderland is out now)**



PHOTOGRAPHY: AMANDA STARR