



[Support Coordinator David Kliss shared these amazing success stories, May 2022]

Success Stories

There are a great many things about the support work that I do on behalf of the IPA that provide me with personal satisfaction, but there is something truly special about supporting another guy during his first public graduated exposure experience. It brings great joy because I know that it can set him on a path which could lead to recovery, and it energizes me because of the high level of trust he places in me at a moment when we both know how vulnerable he is. My role is simply to provide opportunity for him by opening a door, knowing that on the other side of it lies both his greatest fear and his best chance for recovery, and it is up to him to find the courage to walk through it, face his fear, and start the hard, sometimes uphill, work of recovery. It is truly an honor to partner with someone in his first public practice, and for me, it develops a lasting personal connection. The following are the personal success stories, told in their own words, of three remarkable young men who have entered and enriched my life over the past year. I hope that you find inspiration in their words.

Austin

The beginning stages of graduated exposure therapy for overcoming paruresis. I began my recovery by meeting with Dave weekly doing virtual practices. I would set the phone up in the bathroom and have Dave watch me pee. At first it was a very uncomfortable situation, but I was finding it easier and easier, quite quickly at that. Especially with a very high urgency to go, which is something Dave and I discussed a lot.

After about 9 months of practicing virtually, Dave convinced me to finally do a real-life practice. We met at a local mall, discussed our plan to use a small but low traffic bathroom. I would use the urinal and he would stand at the sink moving closer and closer to me while I went. I had arrived at our practice with a FULL bladder. The emphasis on this is so important. As Paruretic people, we dehydrate ourselves as a coping mechanism. You will not have success by trying to use the bathroom dehydrated, and it doesn't really work anyways because at some point you will still need to pee even if you haven't had much to drink. I had to learn this and implement it. Dave and I entered the bathroom and I had to pee so bad that my stream began almost immediately. Although I still was feeling all of the normal feelings of intense anxiety we face in situations of public urination. My knees were quivering in fear, my face flushed red, and heart racing. All while a heavy stream was flowing out of me hitting the back of the urinal at fire hose force. Dave began moving closer and closer until he was literally standing right behind me. At this point I began to cry, both tears of anxiety and joy simultaneously. I have trouble describing the feeling of this but it was very emotional and intense. The last time in my life I had peed with another male that close to me was so long ago I can't even remember. I zipped up and flushed and Dave and I shared a hug, while I wiped the tears from my eyes. We went back to the car and talked about what I just accomplished.

Since then, we had more practices together in the mall, and I began to practice there on my own. I had a misfire the second time with Dave because someone was using a stall in the bathroom we chose to practice, we headed to another bathroom where I peed next to Dave. I left that day on a positive note. Since then, I have peed at my dentist clinic with someone in a stall, with low urgency and next to other men who are also in recovery. I finally feel optimistic about my situation rather than feelings of depression and helplessness that comes with paruresis. My message to others suffering out there would be, at a minimum, reach out to Dave, he is committed to helping and will work with you at YOUR OWN pace. If anything else, he will be someone you can just talk to about paruresis and the struggles because he understands.

Max

After recently attending the Chicago IPA workshop, and having some success doing graduated exposures in public, I've been encouraged and motivated to double down on my practice and find ways to get out there and practice on my own more consistently.

I live in Chicago, and it has been a bit difficult to find good places to practice within the city, as there aren't a ton of malls or other open public places with multiple bathrooms. One place that is great for this kind of practice is stadiums (which in the past has certainly been the kind of place I would avoid).

I live within walking distance of Wrigley Field, so one day, as I was looking for more places to practice, I decided to look at some upcoming Cubs games. Luck had it that there was a game later that night, and there was a ticket out there for only \$2!! (\$7.50 after fees, but still). I decided to buy a ticket, and after work, I took a walk over to Wrigley with a big bottle of water in my hand. I loaded up on the way there and kept going (with a couple of beers) once at the game.

By the fifth inning I was ready to go! The section I was sitting in was relatively empty, so I felt good about attempting to use the bathroom near the section. I walked into the bathroom and someone else came in right after me. We both stood at the urinals, and after a couple of moments, I was peeing at Wrigley Field! I was thrilled! After my practices and time at the workshop, I knew I COULD do it, but actually buying the ticket, taking the walk, loading up in public, and then stepping into the bathroom and actually doing it was a big moment for me and my recovery.

It was an incredible feeling, and I was so happy to be able to send Dave Kliss, my mentor and support throughout my recovery, a text letting him know what I just accomplished! It was a milestone for me, and a day I won't soon forget. Not only because the accomplishment of peeing somewhere I thought was impossible for me only a few years ago, but also to show and remind myself that my recovery is in my own hands, and that I have the power to put myself out there and take steps to continue to recover.

Thank you to Dave Kliss and Dan Rocker for showing me the way during the workshop, to all of the other attendees who shared their stories and support, and to the IPA for showing me the way to recovery. I have a long way to go, but I am so encouraged to know there is a path forward, and so grateful for the support I have received and will continue to need along the way.

Mike

Peeing in public has been a phobia for me for as long as I can remember. Up until I reached my 30's, I accepted my phobia and would use the bathroom stall to take care of business. As I went through my early 30's, I started to notice that it became difficult for me to urinate in a bathroom stall and at that point had the realization that I should probably do something about my phobia. So, as any millennial would do, I took it to the Internet and looked for solutions to breaking the fear of peeing in a public bathroom. Through scrolling on Google, I came across the IPA support group. The time was right around the 1st stage of Covid, where everything was pretty much virtual.

I ended up registering for a virtual IPA one day seminar, hosted by Dan Rocker and spent a fair amount of the time peeing in my bathroom while another attendee was virtually with me over zoom doing the same. After the seminar ended, I decided to tell a good friend of my phobia and asked him to be a "pee buddy." My friend agreed to be my "pee buddy" and did about three practice sessions with me. After about a month, I went back to my day-to-day life and fell back into not carrying about my phobia.

As months passed, summer had arrived, and I found myself struggling with urinating at a wedding. While at a wedding, I hit the head and darted for a bathroom stall. While at the bathroom stall, I spent about five-ten minutes attempting to urinate and was unable to. Embarrassed about my inability to urinate, I decided to walk out of the venue towards my car and was able to urinate alongside my car. The following week, I came up with the notion that I really should find a way to work on my urination phobia, so I reached out to Dan Rocker through the IPA. For those who don't know, Dan Rocker is a licensed therapist who works primarily with individuals struggling with shy bladder aka paruresis. Dan ended up doing a few therapy sessions with. He did a fantastic time helping me not beat myself up for having the condition and gave me some great tips on how to work/cope with paruresis. Leading up to our first therapy session, Dan connected me with the IPA's virtual support group leader, David Kliss. Dan informed me that David lived close to me and would be a great resource to help me with paruresis.

I ended up emailing David and within about 24 hours, David responded to my email. David indicated that he would be happy to talk with me on the phone and look into supporting me in any way that he could. After talking with David on the phone, we agreed to meet at a local mall and work on graduated exposure therapy. During our first meetup, we visited several bathrooms and I had success with David at the first meetup! The first bathroom we visited, I took about 30 seconds to muster up the courage to release, and David commented that I was pushing the urination when I really should've just let the urine come out without putting pressure on the urination. From that experience, I really grasped the process on "feeling the flow" as David calls it and knew I was on my way to recovery.

Since my first mall visit with David, I have now met him for 9 months, almost once every week! About 2 months ago, I attended an in-person IPA weekend seminar in Chicago and had multiple breakthroughs at a very busy mall and a casino in Chicago. As I reflect on the last 9 months, I know I have a long way to go to recovery, but I also know that I have made more strides in my path to recovery than in the last 32 years of my life! If you are reading this and just starting your journey towards recovery, keep it up. Practice makes perfect and if you stick to the path, you will be glad you did. I know I will!