

### Adrienne Smith, Person in Long-Term Recovery

My name is Adrienne Smith and I am a woman in long-term recovery. What that means to me is that I have not used any mood or mind altering substances in over 5 ½ years. I am a registered voter, an employee, a wife, a positive role model to my nephew, a volunteer, and an upstanding member of my community.

I started using alcohol and marijuana at age 13. From that time, I used at least one substance every day for the next 26 years except for the few days that I was unable to get something or was in treatment.

At the age of 18, I added powdered cocaine to the mix.

All the while, maintaining excellent grades in school with little effort.

I was always looking for the maximum outcome with the least amount of effort.

I felt that if I was maintaining good grades and had a job then there wasn't a problem.

Opiates, in the form of other people's prescription pain medication, entered the picture when I was about 25.

They gave me energy and the ability to work long hours and continue my education.

By then I had earned my BSBA and had a good job.

Along with my husband, we also owned our own business, our own home, three rental properties, and 5 vehicles.

Keeping up with all the work we had created started becoming more difficult.

Crack cocaine and heroin entered the picture, and then I quickly lost the ability to maintain my lifestyle.

Work, morals, and possessions became secondary.

Within the next year, I became homeless, penniless, jobless, helpless, hopeless, and unattached to reality.

I began committing more serious crimes and taking part in demoralizing activities.

My perception became distorted.

Drugs became the only thing that mattered.

I didn't see a way out.

The disease of addiction altered my ability to problem solve,

I actually thought that the problem was that I didn't have enough drugs.

Getting robbed at gunpoint during drug deals on the street and home invasions became an acceptable way to live.

I didn't see a problem with not having utilities.

This is how much my addiction distorted my perception.

[MORE ON BACK]

I knew that 28 days in rehab wasn't going to repair all of the damage and chaos in my life.

Thank God I finally got arrested.

I was facing a mandatory minimum of 2-4 years.

I convinced myself that 2-4 years wouldn't seem long and that I could get out and continue my drug use where I had left off.

Recovery didn't seem like a realistic option.

My husband, who had been in recovery for a year, and my attorney talked me into entering Allegheny County Drug Court.

Drug court told me to get into a long term treatment facility or I would go to jail on my trial date.

I chose jail.

I could not stop using.

I wasn't a bad person that needed to get better, I was a sick person that needed to get well.

After 21 days in jail, I was placed in a 6 month, 3C level of care. Then I was fortunate enough to live in supportive housing while attending intensive outpatient 3 days per week. The supportive housing program mandated and provided transportation to 12 step, mutual aid support meetings.

None of these levels of care told me about the MATP, showed me how to make and follow a budget, or taught me about time management. I had to learn from another client how to utilize and navigate public transportation. I thought my credit was beyond repair. I was fortunate enough to have had many these skills prior to my treatment. Even after a year of recovery, I still struggled with communication skills, feelings of inferiority and self esteem issues. Many individuals suffering from substance use disorder do not have these skills. This is why Peer Based Recovery Support Services are so important.

I got a referral to a paid Recovery Support provider while in inpatient treatment.

I did not hear from the agency until six months later.

I was fortunate enough to have met volunteers of Message Carriers and Lost Dreams Awakening who provided me with Recovery Support Services. The recourses that I continue to acquire from volunteering myself at these organizations are immeasurable.

Even if one has these skills, how useful are they if the individual's basic needs are not satisfied? I would not have been able to stay clean without a home, clothing, or food. How would I have gotten to treatment without transportation? How would I even have been accepted into treatment without insurance? How would I have gotten to mutual aid support meetings had I not owned a car or already known someone that would take me?

Timeliness is critical for recovery. Waiting for these services can be the difference between life and death. I believe that if more paid Peer Based Recovery Support Services were available then more people could and would find and sustain recovery.

I am one of the lucky ones.