

I was raised in a good family from a small town in Western Clark County. My mother and father both had good jobs and we went on family vacations every year. My two younger sisters and I enjoyed school and played every sport we could. I had a perfect childhood, until my parents began using crystal meth when I was in middle school. Within eighteen months they lost both of their homes to foreclosure and were divorced shortly after.

I began using drugs shortly after and by the time I was in high school I was in and out of juvenile jail. During this time of my life I had no role models and no positive influences in my life. I began using meth with my parents when I was sixteen years old. My mother was now dating a man who cooked meth, so I had an unlimited supply to use and sell. I was using daily by age seventeen and selling drugs to all my teenage friends. I was also using with my younger sister who was twelve years old at the time.

By the time I was twenty-two years old I was shooting heroin and meth daily, I had been to jail numerous times, dropped out of high school, been convicted of felony burglary, overdosed on Methadone and Xanax, been through inpatient drug treatment, and was homeless. I had went to treatment at McKinley Hall the prior year at the same time as my friends I used with. Needless to say, the first attempt at treatment did not work for me.

At this time in my life I really wanted to turn my life around and create a level of success in my life I had never witnessed before, but I didn't know how. I had never found a way out of the life of poverty and addiction I grew up in. I felt like a failure as a man and didn't want to live any longer.

Then, I entered residential treatment at McKinley Hall for the second time on February 23, 2010 and have been clean and sober ever since. I saw a man that was still clean from the first time I went through treatment six months prior to that, he went through treatment with me and had shared stories with me about his life. He used like I did, and was the first example I had ever witnessed that change was possible.

After leaving treatment, I was still homeless, had a felony record, and no education. I stayed in transitional housing at the Matt Talbot house for the next fifteen months. Even after getting off drugs I still felt like a failure as a man and had to rebuild my life one day at a time.

I bounced around from minimum-wage job to minimum-wage job until I had about a year clean until a man asked me, "Eric, what are your goals?" Nobody had ever asked me that question before. At that time, I wanted to get my GED, open a bank account and get health insurance. And he coached me through that process. At that point, I realized how important it was to have goals and have the right people helping me achieve them. Since then I have been a student of success.

I went on to get my GED, an associate's degree from Clark State, and currently working on my bachelors at Wright State in Social Work. I was able to start a career and advance professionally faster than anyone my age or with a similar background. I became a counselor and worked at McKinley Hall for nearly five years and now work for CareSource as a Life Coach in the Life Services program.

I have helped hundreds of men and women through their process of recovery, including my family. My mother, father and sister have all went through McKinley Hall and by the grace of God we are all clean and in recovery today.

I had four years clean before anyone in my family reached out to me and asked me for help. Thankfully, I was in position to guide them in the right path when they were ready. Last week, I had the privilege of watching my little sister walk across the stage and graduate college, the same sister I used meth with when she was twelve years old.

Today, I have a beautiful wife and an eleven month old baby girl, I am a homeowner, I am a brother, son, friend, and hope shot for anyone seeking recovery. All because treatment was available for me when I needed it the most. Recovery truly is beautiful. We do recover!

Thank you,

Eric Mata