

Success Stories



I was a middle child of a close family who believed that a family who prayed together-stayed together. We were picture-perfect on the outside, but hid the turmoil of an alcoholic father at all costs. In doing so, I hid the turmoil of my feelings on the inside. I felt if I was a good enough child then, my dad wouldn't want to drink and be away from us. These feelings kept me a good student, but also kept me feeling worthless and empty on the inside. No matter what I did, I never felt I was good enough.

I married when I was 21 and remained married seven years. After my father and his wife died, I adopted my 16 month old half-sister. I had another daughter two years later. I was the type who had to be in a relationship. I became whoever the man I happened to be with at the time wanted me to be.

I began using drugs when I was 33 in an attempt to mask my depression and to be the type of girl my guy wanted. I thought the drugs helped. Everything once again was great on the outside but I wanted to die on the inside. I would literally be angry when I realized I was alive and had to put on the happy face and do it all over again .

I moved to north Mississippi in an attempt to do what everyone wanted and go to rehab. I didn't want it, but I made everyone believe I did. After all, the drugs were the only thing I felt kept me alive. I hated life and was merely existing from day to day. I was diagnosed with bi-polar disorder and PTSD. I didn't want to think something was wrong with me so I continued to use illegal drugs because I felt they worked better and faster and I needed the feelings to go away quick.

After a suicide attempt and spending months in psychiatric hospitals, I began to use more. It wasn't long until I was arrested and spent time in jail. I had given up and had a plan to finally end my life. On the night I had planned to end my suffering, one of the jailers called me out of the cell to talk to me. She told me she had no idea why she felt the need to tell me personal things, like her mother committing suicide when she was a 14 year old little girl. My oldest daughter was 14 at the time. That night changed my life. I quit fighting and surrendered everything. I went to a chemical dependency center again, but this time because I wanted to find a new way to live.

The road to recovery hasn't been easy, but it has given me a freedom like none I have ever known. It has given me the opportunity to find out who I am and realize that I am enough just the way I am. I am able to work daily with others who have those same feelings of hopelessness and see them have a transformed life. I am so blessed and humbled daily to work in the mental health field. This week I have taken my oldest daughter to move in the dorm for her second year in college, and I have seen my youngest daughter walk in the door of High School. I could not ask for a better relationship with them than the one I have today. I have less material things than I ever dreamed I'd have, but I am finally able to say that I am comfortable in my own skin and I don't have to hide behind a mask. I wake up each morning smiling just because I am alive and am allowed to have another day.

~Stephanie Stout

RECOVERY: A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.