

Erick's Story:

Rebuilding My Life

It was just over a year ago that Erick hit rock bottom. "I was hunting down drugs to avoid getting sick," he says. He was arrested as part of Operation Helping Hand, a law enforcement initiative in which officers play an active role in connecting individuals suffering from opioid addiction with treatment, recovery and support services. At the police station, Erick spoke to Maria Alvarez, a Recovery Specialist* with The Center for Alcohol and Drug Resources, a program of Children's Aid and Family Services. "Maria made me feel comfortable and at ease," Erick says. "She said to me, 'this is what it's like now, and this is what it *can* be.'"

Erick says that his arrest was the push he needed to begin the process of recovery, and he expresses gratitude toward the police officers and their desire to help him. What began at age 12 as sneaking beer with his friends had become, two decades later, a physical dependency. "I didn't enjoy it at the end," he says. "Drugs and alcohol controlled my life."

After agreeing to seek help, Erick entered a detox facility and then residential treatment. The program was highly structured, and Erick responded well to the intensive treatment. After he completed the program, he moved to New York and started rebuilding his life. "I called Maria



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right away and she connected me with my sponsor, who understands what I'm going through and has helped guide me through the 12 Steps program," he says.

He also has a strong support system of family, friends and other members of Alcoholics Anonymous, and is open about being in recovery. Typically an outgoing, insightful person, Erick had become isolated and depressed when he was in active addiction, and over the past year, he has learned to lean on his support system. "I'm not doing this alone and that gives me a big comfort level," he says.

He is still in touch with Maria, and says they've built a trusting relationship and a friendship. "It's not easy to get clean," Maria says. "But Erick is on fire, he wants his recovery so much. For me to have played a small part in his recovery means so much, and I am very grateful. I say small part because Erick is doing all the hard work."



CHILDREN'S AID AND FAMILY SERVICES

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Besides maintaining his recovery, Erick is focused on his health, his career and rebuilding his finances. He works full time for a "green" company and enjoys being busy and setting goals. "I lost everything and had to put my ego aside and start over again," he says. "But I use this experience as motivation and remind myself of how fortunate I am to have this second chance. My goal is to be a productive, positive citizen and treat myself and everyone else with respect." ●

It is only with your help that we can provide comprehensive recovery support services to those who, like Erick, are on their recovery journey, setting goals for themselves and achieving them daily as they rejoin and contribute positively to our communities. Please make a gift today!

Your support also helps us provide community residences, support services and day programming for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; foster care and adoption services; safe, supervised housing for teen mothers and their babies; alcohol and substance misuse education and prevention; and other vital community programs.

Together, we are changing lives. Please give as generously as you can using the enclosed envelope or online at www.cafsnj.org.

Thank You!

**A Recovery Specialist offers valuable guidance by sharing their own experiences recovering from an Opioid Use Disorder by helping to build skills, assisting and addressing specific needs that someone is faced with as they are in early recovery and by improving social connectedness.*

Does Peer Support Make a Difference?

Emerging research shows that peer support is beneficial for recovery from behavioral health conditions. Benefits of peer support may include:

Increased engagement in self care and wellness

(Davidson, et al., 2012)

Raised empowerment scores

(Davidson, et al., 1999; Dumont & Jones, 2002; Ochocka, Nelson, Janzen, & Trainor, 2006; Resnick & Rosenheck, 2008)

Increased empathy and acceptance (camaraderie)

(Coatswortha Puspokey, Forchuk, & Warda Griffin, 2006; Davidson, et al., 1999)

Increased self-esteem and confidence

(Davidson, et al., 1999; Salzer, 2002)

Increased sense of control and ability to bring about changes in their lives

(Davidson, et al., 2012)

Increased sense that treatment is responsive and inclusive of needs

(Davidson, et al., 2012)

Increased sense of hope and inspiration

(Davidson, et al., 2006; Ratzlaff, McDiarmid, Marty, & Rapp, 2006)

Increased social support and social functioning

(Kurtz, 1990; Ochocka et al., 2006; Trainor, Shepherd, Boydell, Leff, & Crawford, 1997; Yanos, Primavera, & Knight, 2001)

"Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Value of Peers, 2017."

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