

I have been struggling with heroin since I was 15. I am not almost 29. I went on Methadone in 2000, and got a real chance. Past charges with the law due to my using (stealing, forgery) to get high, caught up to me in 2003. I got arrested, and sent to prison. Of course, I had to detox, in jail, with nothing. It hurt SO badly. I can't even describe what I went through. Went to prison for a year and a half. Got out and of course thought I was away for so long, it would be nice to feel that great, "everything is O.K. feeling" high I that I got from my heroin. Gee, what happened?! I called my clinic, crying, pleading, and told them what I had done. They wanted me to come in THAT DAY! I have so much love and respect for my clinic.

I have been in treatment 8 times, halfway houses, everything you can think of to get away. I even went to prison. I STILL could not stay away from heroin. Over the years I would get clean for awhile. Eight or nine months at the most. But then...I would just do it just once, just to feel that "O.K." again. I would promise myself that I would not get a habit. Ya Right! I would throw everything away that I had gained in just a few days. All the money I had, gone. No more paying bills. No more job. Just back to using. My parents had given up on me. My father and I never had a good relationship, when the drugs came into my life; it was completely over with him. The first couple of times that I got clean, he would come to my "graduations" from treatment. Either I would stay away in the halfway house or he would help me get an apartment and get started. I would eventually mess it up. Then he would be out of my life again. He even went as far as to take life insurance out on me so that he could afford to bury me when it was time. I didn't care. I was losing friends left and right, and I did not care. I just figured one more funeral I have to go to. At the end of my using, I lost 11 friends. One to two a year for awhile.

Everyone was done with me, except my mom. She just could not do it. Even though I would ask for money from her everyday; if she would not give it to me I took it, she still could not let me go. I probably got at least two to three hundred a day. My mom had pretty much lost everything she had. She eventually had to stay away from me. I was not allowed at her house. She still would call me about every day, though, to probably make sure I was not dead.

My using days were a nightmare. I would use anywhere that I could. Bathrooms, bedrooms, closets, parks, cars, I even got high while I was driving. That would happen when I was sick enough that I could not make it to where I was going. I had no family left, no friends that were any good, no place to live, and I still did not care. As long I had a fix, everything was O.K. for awhile. I got to the point that if I died; I would think my fight with this "is finally over." I almost envied the ones that were gone. How could I have done that to myself?

I heard about a treatment called Methadone Maintenance one night while I was at work. An old friend came in and told me he was on the program, and that is why I had not seen him for a long time. I called my mom that night and told her about it. She told me she would do anything to get me to stop. She called the clinic for me and made the appointment. We went the next day.

I did well with MMT, but the past always catches up. I had past charges that I could not get away from. I had to go do time in prison. Of course I could not be on methadone. While I was there, I was completely chemical free. I could never get myself "excited" about anything. Once I was there for awhile, and my routine set in, I still could not get myself to be "happy." It was like I was missing something inside of me. I could not enjoy things like I saw everybody else doing. When I got out, I figured I would not have to worry about heroin again because I have not been around for a long time. It did not take long for it to find me. I wanted to actually "feel good" be "happy," even for a short time. Get that feeling inside myself that I missed for so long. (During my prison time.) I now know why I am like that. Methadone actually replaces the chemicals in my brain to make me feel "normal." I no longer even think about

getting high. Methadone did not make my problems go away, but it helped me to start dealing with life on a level that everybody else gets to.

I am now in college and almost done with my AA in Human Services. I will move on to get my BA. I get really good grades too! That has never happened to me before! I try so hard now in school. I want to be proud of myself, and prove to my family that I can do it. My mom and I are now so close. She is like my best friend. We talk everyday. Sometimes three to four times a day. I come to her house all the time now, to help her around the house, or just to visit and hang out. When she wants to go somewhere, she always calls me and asks me to go. The rest of my family still has not made an effort to contact me. I know I deserve it, because of my past. I want to prove to them and myself that I have changed, for good. Methadone has saved my life. I feel O.K. with myself now. I still have A LOT of regrets, and I am trying to work through them. I have paid my mom back a lot of the money I took. That really helps me feel better. I got student loans, and since I am working full time, I can afford to give most of it to her. I also have some real true friends in my life. I never had that before. It feels so good to have people in my life that care about me, not what I can get them.

I have a LIFE! A WONDERFUL life! I cannot say enough GREATNESS about my clinic and Methadone. I love it and the people that work there. They gave me a chance to live. I have a nice house, and a great partner who supports me to the fullest. He never went down my road, but he works hard to understand. I even have custody of my 3-year-old son! I had him right before I went to prison. When I got out I tried to live with his mom. Did not work. She does not use, but we are just not compatible to live together. We remain close friends, though, which is so good for my son. He is such a daddy's boy. He is at my house most of the time. He is my light. Well, I have said A LOT, but I hope what I say here helps even 1 person who is thinking of starting the program. DO IT! Your life is worth it no matter what. Take my story to heart. If it takes taking Methadone to lead to a happy, healthy life, take advantage of it, I do.