

## Next Step Staff Stories: Jeremy Styles



### Jeremy's Story

I was born and raised in Asheville, North Carolina and had a normal childhood growing up. All through high school, I played 3 different sports. I can remember, back when I was growing up, that I always wanted to feel included but instead never felt good enough and always less than. Sports provided me with some feeling of being a part of something. Once the sports stopped after high school, my disease of addiction progressed and went downhill.

I started using drugs and alcohol at the age of 12 and I remember thinking at the time that this has been the feeling I'd been searching for. I hung around with the wrong crowd almost everywhere I went after high school. As a result, I was in the wrong place at the wrong time and found myself involved in a very traumatic experience. Afterwards, my using continued to get worse. I started doing harder drugs and more of them.

On January 9, 2010, my daughter Leighton was born. After her birth, I tried to straighten up some. Four years prior, an addiction psychiatrist had prescribed me with Suboxone and Xanax. I began substituting the illegal drugs I'd been taking with the prescription ones. After a year on a maintenance program, I started doing illegal drugs again and sold and traded my prescription medication to support my addiction.

Because of the lifestyle of drugs and alcohol, I've lost many friends to death and most of them before I turned 25. During the last 6 months I was using, I became an IV drug user and it took a harsh toll on me spiritually. I had to go to any means necessary to acquire drugs, and just getting out of bed was exhausting. I eventually stole from my

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parents and pawned almost everything I owned.

My daughter's mother caught word of how bad my drug use had become, and staged an intervention for me with my parents. A couple of weeks later I unwillingly went to my first-ever detox program. Within 24 hours of release, I was using drugs again. I just wasn't done doing drugs yet; not even for my own child or family. After 2 weeks of misery and using, I hit my knees begging for help. I knew that if I didn't get help I was going to die on my bathroom floor, leaving my daughter with no father.

The next day was August 28, 2015 and I checked into a rehab in Black Mountain, NC. I honestly wanted to change my life and stop doing drugs. However, after using for 15 years I wasn't sure how. Once I checked into rehab, I became a student of recovery, participating in activities and meetings and trying to find a new way to live. After rehab I went to long term treatment in Asheville for 8 weeks. I wasn't able to see my daughter for almost 3 months and that was extremely hard for me, but I called her daily and remained a parent to her. I knew that my time in treatment was for the greater good and that things were slowly getting better.

I moved back home with my parents after treatment. The first day out of treatment I went to a Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meeting, I told everyone I was new and asked for their help. I was given many phone numbers and asked my first sponsor to sponsor me at 60 days clean. For the first 30 days, I had to call him every day to show my willingness. That got me into a good habit and I continue to call him every day, especially when I need help or someone to talk to.

When I started NA I didn't know how to live life clean but for ONCE in my life I actually felt like I was home, like I was a part of something huge. I now have a huge family of recovery and can honestly say that without the NA program I would not be here today. I have made a few mistakes along the way but have followed most suggestions given to me. I am in a relationship and expecting my 2nd child on January 10, 2017. I am the happiest I've ever been in my entire life. I love myself today and I have a purpose in life. My life did a complete 180 and I'm

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truly a miracle, here only by God's grace. I am a productive member of society and work a full time job in addition to my part time job at Next Step Recovery. I still attend 5 or more NA meetings a week, call my sponsor, read the literature and help the newcomers. I do service work through Hospitals and Institutions with the same panel of recovering addicts that came to share the message of recovery with me last August. Helping other recovering addicts is my given purpose in life and I'm more positive of that than anything else in life. You NEVER have to use again, no matter what happens. Today we have the power of our choices.

### **How Jeremy Came to Next Step Recovery**

I reached out to my friend of 10 years, Phillip Cooper, because I knew he worked at Next Step Recovery. I expressed interest in a job in the recovery field and he suggest that I contact Next Step. I followed his advice and spoke with Terry, then Susan. This job has been the greatest dream fulfilled to this day. I am more proud of myself for this job and career than anything else in life. Money couldn't buy my spirituality today. God is Good.

### **Jeremy's Advice for Those on the Path to Recovery**

My advice to anyone seeking recovery is to first give yourself a break and take things one day at a time. I can be my own worst enemy at times. If I start projecting into the future, I begin to get frustrated and my anxiety and PTSD gets out of control. I've learned that this is an incurable disease (like diabetes) and requires daily maintenance in order to recover. Staying Honest, Open-Minded and Willing are the three principles I live by to the best of my ability. Having a supportive family has been a huge plus in my recovery and talking to them honestly about my struggles and thoughts helps them help me. If I isolate myself from the world, I will use again. I've also had to forgive myself of mistakes and choices made while I was in active addiction because those don't define who I am today. Perception is key to life. If I remain perceptive to everyone I encounter and try to put myself in their shoes, I've found that it makes life easier to cope with. I suggested to my family that they research the disease of addiction

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and attend a 12 step program or Al-Anon for better insight to this disease because it is fatal and does not discriminate from anyone!

### **Fun facts about Jeremy**

At 6'3" I am the tallest in my entire family and I've also never flown on an airplane.

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