



“Rock Bottom”

Tommy Martinez

When Tommy Martinez was pointed to Uplift, he had been living in his 1995 Toyota Camry for almost a year. He had completed his service in the Navy and was well on his way to begin the next chapter in his life when he was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. This is around the same time he was introduced to some local mosques, who knew to connect him with Uplift Charity as his financial struggles started to become unmanageable.

Tommy was losing his motivation to get his life back on track. He seemed deflated, even though those that knew him told us he was full of energy and ambition when he left the Navy. His physical health was having an effect on his mental wellbeing. He had lost his apartment a long time back and lost his fiancé soon after that; he was simply trying to get by day-by-day. Tommy’s daily focus was to make enough money to eat and put gas in his car in order to keep warm during the cold nights.

As soon as we met Tommy, we knew we had a long road to success. He needed emergency funding, but more dire was his need for a sound action plan – guidance. Multiple Uplift Charity case managers worked with Tommy to guide him using compassion, tough love, ultimatums, a safety net and much more.

Our biggest challenge was getting Tommy to stay focused. He wanted to give up, he wanted to curl up and allow the community to take care of him without holding him accountable for his part of the deal. Tommy didn’t want to follow Uplift’s proposed service plan, he didn’t show up to interviews that Uplift had set up for him, he missed his first day of work at a job he finally landed, and quit another job within a week. At this point, we told him that he’d be on his own if he continued his series of irresponsible behavior. Case managers had a hard time gaining Tommy’s trust. Our first breakthrough was when we made a deal with Tommy: he would work any odd job to make some cash and Uplift would match his first paycheck so he could get back on track. We finally earned his trust and began to motivate him. We made sure he had food to eat but beyond that, we at times withheld his financial assistance when he continued to act irresponsibly.

Finally, when Tommy was beginning to work more consistently, and continue his medical treatment as prescribed by his doctors, we made a new deal with him: get a full-time job, show consistency, and find an affordable living arrangement, we’d help him to secure the place.

We’re happy to report, less than two weeks ago Tommy received his sixth consistent paycheck from a full-time job, and found a room for rent on a month-to-month basis. Uplift worked the entire weekend to ensure that Tommy secured the room despite the landlord’s somewhat unreasonable time-constraints. Tommy was moved out from his car and into his new home just before the rain storms.

One late night he texted us from his room as he watched the rain pour down onto the windshield of his car, instead of watching the rain from inside his car. He was grateful, happy, and most of all, relieved. Tommy’s story doesn’t end here, but he’s made strides from when we first met him. Next, he plans to renew his class A drivers license in order to drive rigs again.

On our last phone call with Tommy he told us “when I was hitting rock bottom, I didn’t realize that the bottom was actually a trampoline. I’m on my way back up now. The trampoline was Uplift Charity and the Muslim community!”