

Life After Opioid Addiction – Avoiding Relapse

Recovering from an Opioid addiction can be difficult – but with the right treatment plan and support, things can be a bit easier. Recovery also means making some major changes to your life. Jake Jansen knows that firsthand.

“They say in recovery, there’s only one thing that you have to change that one thing is everything. And that was certainly true for my life.”

Jake has been in recovery for several years for an Opioid addiction. He started abusing prescription medications and then moved to Heroin because it was easier to get. After finishing an inpatient treatment program, he had to work to avoid the people, places and things that could trigger a relapse.

“I had to give myself the best opportunity to remove as many triggers as possible and that meant changing my phone number, changing my housing, you know changing my circle of friends.”

For Robyn Ellis, those triggers are emotions.

“Holidays and birthdays and anniversaries. Those are hard for me because that’s the internal thing that sets off, it’s like I’m going to feel down today. And I think that’s the one thing for me as an addict that I want to run from is my feelings.”

She struggled with opioids for several years. Both of her parents had problems with drugs and alcohol. She lost both at an early age. After trying several treatment options, Robyn found a plan and support system that worked for her.

“I call my sponsor and she reminds me that like how amazing it is that I get to be on the journey that I’m on today and I get to be sober and I get to be a mom to my daughter. So, reaching out to people who understand again is a big thing for me.”

Long term treatment can also include the use of Opioid Replacement medications – such as Methadone and Buprenorphine. These drugs protect certain receptors in your brain that opioids attach to, to give you those feelings of euphoria. The opioid replacement drugs can help curb cravings and wean you off opioids.

“I encourage all of my patients with opioid addiction to consider medication and to not walk out of my treatment facility with their opioid receptors empty and available for heroin or something else.”

Your healthcare provider will work with you to figure out what therapies or medications should be in your treatment plan. This will lower your risk of relapse, but it doesn’t guarantee it.

“Addiction is a chronic disease. There is no cure for addiction.”

And relapses can happen. But relapsing doesn’t mean you’ve failed.

“The misunderstanding and stigma is when people come back for more service with addiction, they’re considered to be a failure. They’re weak or they’re not doing it the right way, or the treatment wasn’t correct, or it never was appropriate in the first place. And we don’t say that about relapse as with other chronic conditions.”

Recovery is a journey. It requires a constant commitment to stay clean and healthy, and with the right treatment plan, you can get there.

“I have to continue to work at my recovery and build on the person that I’m becoming and not slip.”