

My Story

I have always had an traits and behaviors of someone struggle with the disease of Addiction. There was never trying something or dabbling, it was always all or nothing. As a kid I was obsessed with Ice hockey. It gave me a ton of opportunities as a young adult with my education and it kept me occupied to not want to venture out to try new things. It was a good thing, but it was all I knew. It was what I identified as. When I got hurt my senior year of my college career, it was absolutely devastating to me because that was my final year to play at a competitive level. Due to emotional trauma, little to no educations on drugs, my identity being completely stripped of who I am, and already living a double life as a closeted gay woman, I was brought to my knees for the first time. Opioids was my companion though all the physical and emotional pain I had shoved so deep inside me trying to be in my eyes what I viewed as a “strong” person.

Once the opioids latched on to me and I had consciously became aware, it was already too late. It felt like being thrown out of an airplane without a parachute. I had convinced myself, as most people living with this disease tend to do, that I could stop whenever I wanted to. During the time period of my use, that overdosed me 3 times and nearly took my life, it claimed several of the lives of some of my closest friends and family. You would think that would be enough to make me want to get sober, but it only drove me further deep into my disease. As if I wasn't already drowning as it was, I only added more harmful behaviors to my every day or merely existing. I had ran into a money issue and had lost the trust of everyone I loved and cared about but my brain wasn't done demanding me to find a way to get my drug of choice. So, I got the bright idea that I would take whatever money I had and put a very small portion of it towards making more money by gambling. Granted my thinking was backwards because so was my behaviors.

I started gambling on sites in NJ where it was legal whenever I was there visiting family. I'm big into craps, blackjack, and texas hold em'. I'd win some and I'd lose some which wasn't really driving my desire to want to continue to try to make “extra” money this way. I then found a youtube video of people who gambled online on a site that allowed you to use a fake IP address, so I no longer had to wait to go to NJ to gamble. This site not only gave me unlimited access to it at all times, but most of its slot games had bonus buys. I hate the slots when I'm in an actual casino but online I'm drawn to it.

As a new member to this site, they had sign on bonuses and free spins, and I didn't even have to come out of pocket at first. Then the worst possible thing happened to me. On a .40 slot game, I had won a bonus of 1,400. I didn't believe it was true until I was able to withdraw it and see it in my bank. My brain released a rush of dopamine which meant I had just found my next bad habit to add to my list that I was already conducting. I never won that much money again but this site, along with my use, had me take out 5 cash advances on brand newly opened credit cards, as well as 3 personal loans for 5,000 each. My credit was perfect until I completely destroyed it with no looking back. I either spent or lost every single penny. Eventually, no one would loan me money, nor would they approve me for a credit card. At that point, death seemed easier than having to face the hole I now found myself in. Anything to avoid having to confront the consequences.

By the grace of god, I went away to rehab and got sober on 5/4/2014. I knew drugs was my biggest downfall and that everything else was just to supply that habit. I also didn't give anything else that I did while I was using enough credit. My next run in with gambling happened in my sobriety about 2 years after being sober. I had stayed sober, got my life realigned, started to right my wrong doings while I was using and then it was time for my cousins wedding, which I was in. As typical as most almost married people tend to do, we were heading to Vegas for the bachelorette party. As people tend to let loose and enjoy themselves there, I knew I could lose focus of my recovery and didn't attend some of the wilder plans that they had in store. I didn't want to test my strength or even put myself in a triggering situation. Non the less, that left me board in the hotel room of a Vegas hotel. What does every hotel in Vegas have downstairs in the lobby so that it cannot be avoided? A casino. At this point in my recovery, I had gotten a job and was working to pay off the debt I had originally put myself in. Hard work is tiresome and while I was hyper focusing on not picking up, my brain convinced me of a way to get my life back on track quicker and to start once again trying to achieve the goals I had set for myself. The thought always sounds so much nicer than what actually ends up happening.

I found myself at a craps table that was hot and cold. I said I'm only going bet \$100 and then I'm done. The second I put my money on the table, the table went ice cold. I lost that \$100 within the first 10 mins. I stayed to watch the next roller and he was on fire, and I thought ok, let me just win back my money and then I'll be done. I went to the ATM and took out \$300 because I had told myself with the fee amount, it made more sense to take out what I needed for the next few days. Once again, I put the money on the table, and it went ice cold. So, I thought, ok this is a pattern, that means the next roll is going to go off. 30

minutes later I am down \$400. by the time my cousins and her friends came back, I was down almost 4,000. The only reason I was only down that amount is because my bank said I had reached my limit for the number of times I was able to withdraw. For the rest of the trip, I laid in bed in silence and didn't move from the room. When I got home, I did another 90 in 90 because I felt like I had relapsed. I since then have never allowed myself to be alone in a casino or have I ever downloaded a casino application, even for play money, on my phone. I noticed that my disease has no barriers, it has no remorse, and it will continue to find ways to become active in my life once again one way or another. If I am not aware of my behaviors on a constant basis, my disease will find a new way to enter back into my life but in disguise. This will be a battle I will have to fight for the rest of my life.